



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD  
SEVENTH ASSEMBLY

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

~~XXXXX~~ MAY 2011

[www.hansard.act.gov.au](http://www.hansard.act.gov.au)



Wednesday, 4 May 2011

Schools—Catholic .....	1737
Animal Welfare Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 .....	1757
Gungahlin Drive extension .....	1772
Questions without notice:	
Chief Minister—comments .....	1782
Transport—services .....	1783
Budget—revenue .....	1785
Planning—guidelines.....	1788
Government buildings—vacancy rates.....	1789
Budget—assessment .....	1792
Housing—affordability.....	1796
Federal government—buildings .....	1798
Childcare—costs.....	1802
Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—personal duress alarms .....	1805
Low income households—assistance .....	1806
Answer to question on notice:	
Question No 1589 .....	1810
Gungahlin Drive extension .....	1810
Sustainability strategies .....	1818
Water—secondary uses.....	1840
National Volunteer Week 2011 .....	1854
Adjournment:	
Mrs Austra Skuja .....	1866
Japan earthquake and tsunami .....	1866
World Asthma Day .....	1867
Sustainability strategies .....	1868
Kiribati.....	1869
Japan earthquake and tsunami .....	1871

**Wednesday, 4 May 2011**

**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.

## **Schools—Catholic**

**MR DOSZPOT** (Brindabella) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Catholic Schools Week is being celebrated throughout all ACT Catholic schools from 1 May to 7 May;
- (b) that the Catholic school system is an integral component of the ACT's education system, educating 26 per cent of students in the ACT;
- (c) that Catholic schools have the right to retain their autonomy to manage their schools in accordance with their values;
- (d) the importance of the continuation of block funding so that funding can be distributed according to need;
- (e) that parents have the right to choose the kind of education they want for their children; and
- (f) that the Catholic school system educates a comprehensive demographic range of students; and

(2) calls on the:

- (a) Minister for Education and Training and the Treasurer to make representations to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that funding for this sector does not decrease in real terms;
- (b) Commonwealth and ACT Governments to ensure that Catholic schools continue to be an accessible choice for parents to educate their children; and
- (c) ACT Government to provide disaggregation of per student total expenses paid in monetary terms from ACT and Commonwealth Government sources and to report this to the Assembly by the end of this current financial year.

Mr Speaker, Victor Hugo once said, "He who opens a school door, closes a prison." This is a most apt commentary on the state of education in the ACT in recent years. As Catholic Schools Week is celebrated across Australia this week, it is timely to reflect on the celebration and acknowledge the contribution of the Catholic Church to Australian education.

The history of Catholic school education across Australia and here in the ACT is one of strong growth and proud achievement that includes the opening of over 1,700 schools Australia-wide during the last 180 years. As the Catholic Education Commission so eloquently outlines on its website:

Catholic schools seek to contribute to the creation of an Australian community that is highly educated, skilled and cultured with an ability to promote and embrace a critical analysis of social issues, the expansion of knowledge and the pursuit of truth. Such a community will be marked by a vigorous intellectual and cultural life, accessible to all. Education has individual and private benefits, but it is also very much a public good whose benefits enhance the whole community. Catholic schools emphasise the contribution of education to the common good of the Australian community ... Those who choose a Catholic school for their children do so on the understanding that they respect and agree to support the Catholic identity of the school and acknowledge the importance of religious education for their children.

The Catholic school is open to all who are willing to commit to support the philosophy, values and aims of Catholic schooling. No student will be refused enrolment because of an inability, as distinct from an unwillingness, of a parent/guardian to meet financial requirements.

Here in the ACT there are 32 schools in the Catholic school system and they range from preschool to year 12 and educate over 17,000 students each year. In 2013, another Catholic school will open in Gungahlin, caring for students from preschool to year 12.

I understand that the Catholic Education Office is proposing to open a new year 7 to 12 campus of the existing Good Shepherd Catholic primary school, Amaroo, from the first day of term 1 in 2013. The new campus will be located in Gungahlin. Enrolments will be offered to year 7 in 2012 to start in 2013.

Based on the February 2011 ACT schools census, over 26 per cent of all students in the ACT attend a Catholic school. Catholic Schools Week is held annually throughout New South Wales and the ACT by Catholic schools to celebrate, and to raise awareness of, the strength and values of the Catholic school system.

It provides an opportunity for Catholic schools to showcase what is done every day in their schools and invites the community in to experience teaching and learning at its best. This week is about strengthening relationships between all those that have a stake in our schools—students, teachers, families, parishioners and members of the wider community.

Parents who choose a Catholic education for their sons and daughters do so because they value the Catholic school system for a range of reasons. They want their children educated in the Catholic faith and traditions, including religious instructions and sacramental programs, and pastoral care within the school and at the community level.

Let us not forget that it is not just children of Catholic parents who attend Catholic schools. It is not just parents who can afford to pay school fees who send their

children to them. Parents make a conscious choice based on a range of values and aspirations for their children and often suffer financial hardship as a consequence to ensure education of choice. It is important that we as legislators allow and encourage that freedom.

Given the vital and valuable contribution Catholic schools make to the education of students in this territory, it remains an indictment of the misguided thinking of this government that while per student recurrent expenditure in government schools is 27 per cent above the national average, territory financial support per student for Catholic schools is 18 per cent below the national average and remains one of the lowest levels of state and territory support in the country.

The Catholic Education Commission highlighted this fact in their submission to the government's 2011-12 budget consultation process. The same submission stressed that the average financial resources available to an ACT Catholic school student are only 66 per cent of that of an ACT government school student.

It suggested that per student income from private sources in ACT schools is more than double the level of support provided by the ACT government. Parents in the ACT wishing to exercise choice in the selection of schooling for their children indeed pay a high price. I guess, though, that that is not surprising given that this is the government that has chosen to close schools and open prisons.

While Catholic schools operate on fewer resources than government schools, they do it well. In the latest NAPLAN results for ACT schools, a number of Catholic primary schools are ranked in the top 10 for reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy. I refer to schools like St Joseph's primary school in O'Connor, St Clare of Assisi in Condor, St John the Apostle in Florey and St Jude's primary in Holder. At the secondary level, Merici girls college at Braddon, St Mary MacKillop school at Isabella and Daramalan College are all in the top 10 in various tables. I reiterate that they achieve this in the ACT with only two-thirds the resources available to government school students.

Over the years there have been some other outstanding achievements in the ACT Catholic school system, whether it be vocational, sporting, community service or the arts. In the sports arena, Canberra Catholic schools have a proud and enviable record. No school in Canberra can quite match the long and proud record of St Edmund's in rugby.

Former Australian Wallaby captain George Gregan was a student at St Edmund's, as was current Wallaby Saia Faingaa. St Edmund's have four former students in the current Brumbies team—people like Matt Giteau, who even the least-interested sports follower would know. League players such as Ricky Stuart started their football career in rugby at St Eddie's. Current year 12 Marist student Tim Cusack is in rugby's national talent program, while Daramalan currently boasts a member of the junior Davis Cup tennis team.

But it is not just on the sports field that Catholic schools have made a contribution. Marist College at Phillip has been selected as one of the 18 schools across Australia to

be awarded a prestigious MindMatters national award for their school's involvement in mental health initiatives. A former Marist student was last year chosen as the HIA apprentice of the year and a current student of St Clare's College who is undertaking an Australian school-based apprenticeship represented the ACT at the national training awards in Sydney earlier this year.

In musical productions, many of us have enjoyed performances by St Mary MacKillop College, Marist College and Merici College students, to name just a few of the many of these colleges to also receive recognition through the prestigious CAT awards. So it is important, not just for this week, that the Assembly recognises the contribution that Catholic schools make to the development of Canberra and the education of its future leaders. It is important that we continue to support choice for parents in schooling.

The theme for this year's Catholic Schools Week is "A learning adventure, a journey of faith". Indeed, it is both an adventure and journey of faith for non-government schools in the territory as they continue to defend and justify their right of existence.

We know, for example, that the Australian Greens' education policies would remove approximately \$60 million from ACT non-government schools by diminishing commonwealth government funding. We know their policies would remove freedom of religion by forcing faith-based schools to employ people who do not share their values and we know that they would stop the development of new non-government schools.

What they and other critics of non-government schooling fail to appreciate is that parents have a right to determine their child's education. Parents want and deserve choice in what is one of the most important decisions they make for their families. Over 40 per cent of parents in the ACT have made such a choice. It is clear that they support choice. Given the success enjoyed by schools such as I have mentioned, it is no coincidence that over the past six years student enrolments at non-government schools have consistently increased.

In the latest February 2011 ACT school census, there were 66,144 students enrolled in ACT public and non-government schools. Interestingly, while government primary schools enjoyed increases, there were drops in high school and special enrolments, leaving a net total increase of 157. By comparison, non-government schools had increased enrolments of 575, with strong growth in independent primary schools—487 or 9.9 per cent—and Catholic colleges, 4.4 per cent.

Catholic schools have also had continuing growth in the number of students with special needs over the past five years. These figures highlight the important and significant role that non-government education plays in the lives of Canberra families.

Opponents of non-government schooling fail to recognise that families who pay for their children's education at non-government schools are also taxpayers and their schooling choices save the public purse many millions of dollars. This is an oft and conveniently forgotten fact when hardline leftist rhetoric starts. Of course, those same naysayers also believe that non-government schools are only for rich kids with stellar

IQs and also suggest that Catholic schools are overfunded. Neither is true. Families across the territory from all backgrounds often struggle to pay school fees, while the schools face an increasing and continuous challenge to keep their fees at affordable levels.

The ACT Catholic Education Office made the following comments in their February 2011 CEO bulletin:

When both Australian and Territory Government funding is taken into account, an ACT Catholic school student attracts substantially less government funding than an ACT government school student ... Catholic System schools are not funded individually. Funding attracted by Systemic school is distributed among member schools on the basis of need.

The ACT Catholic Schools Systems receives the lowest level of Australian Government funding per student of any Catholic System in Australia and one of the lowest levels of State/Territory Government support.

The parents of ACT Catholic schools have a similar socio-economic status to the parents of ACT Government schools yet the level of funding available to Catholic schools from government and fees is less than Government schools.

Mr Speaker, reflecting on the second part of my motion, I am proposing that this Assembly:

(2) calls on the:

- (a) Minister for Education and Training and the Treasurer to make representations to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that funding for this sector does not decrease in real terms;
- (b) Commonwealth and ACT Governments to ensure that Catholic schools continue to be an accessible choice for parents to educate their children; and
- (c) ACT Government to provide disaggregation of per student total expenses paid in monetary terms from ACT and Commonwealth Government sources and to report this to the Assembly by the end of this current financial year.

Between the ACT and Federal Labor governments, non-government schools face an uncertain future. Government funding is vital to ensure the financial viability of schools in this sector. Obviously, all schools make long-term strategic decisions based on what they believe will be the level of available funds. They need stability and funding certainty from governments and they need reasonable notice of any changes.

So too do parents need that certainty. They make decisions on what they believe will be the service that the school of their choice is offering and what fees they may need to pay. There are many considerations parents need to make, be it pedagogical style, faith, values, the culture of the school or the pastoral care offered. But the cost of that choice is also a major consideration.

My motion also calls on the government to provide desegregation of per student total expenses paid in monetary terms from both ACT and commonwealth government sources and to report this information to the Assembly. This information should be transparent and freely available to all of us. We should know on what basis the government makes financial decisions that affect so critically the viability of schools in the non-government sector.

Mr Speaker, in summary, I congratulate the ACT Catholic schools on their continued contribution to ACT education and I look forward to joining with them in their celebration of Catholic Schools Week. I applaud their initiative and the dedication of their principals and teaching staff for the valued contribution they make to ACT education.

I also thank the many schools throughout the whole ACT education system that have shown such wonderful hospitality to me when I have had the opportunity to visit them. I look forward to meeting many more throughout the territory in the months and years to come. I commend this motion to the ACT Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation and Minister for Gaming and Racing) (10.16): I thank Mr Doszpot for raising this matter today. I say from the outset that there is much in Mr Doszpot's motion for which I think we will find broad agreement across all parties in the Assembly today. I have circulated an amendment that goes to address a couple of elements that are important to raise in the context of the debate, and I will come to that shortly.

I say from the outset that the government is committed to ensuring that all students in the ACT have the best chance in life through quality education, regardless of the school that they attend and regardless of which sector that school is in. We want all young people in the territory to be equipped with the skills to lead fulfilling lives through quality education delivered by exceptional teachers. And that is why we have invested in the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, which begins operations this year and services all school sectors. The institute will ensure standards of teachers in ACT schools are upheld and that professional development is promoted.

I have said many times during my time in this place that the public versus private debate in education is over. We recognise that value comes with each system, and we ensure that we fund all schools appropriately according to need. That is why there is cooperation within the three school sectors—public, Catholic systemic and independent—and why we are working together to introduce the Australian curriculum across all three sectors.

This partnership and commitment to rolling out the national curriculum has positioned the ACT as the national leader in this important initiative, and it is why the sectors are working together to ensure that our schools remain at the forefront of educational innovation in this nation.

We continue to work together to ensure that our schools remain safe places through the ACT safe schools task force. Successful cross-sectoral collaboration through the

task force was recently evident in the highly successful student summit on cyber safety, entitled “Who R U in the digital world?” It was attended by more than 200 students from across all ACT high schools.

The summit, held on 18 March, was an event that empowered and equipped students and teachers with the skills to be safe in a digital environment. And it was, I believe, a terrific representation of what the school sectors can achieve when they work together on a common goal—in this instance, focusing on supporting students. We will continue to seek and support these important partnerships between our public, Catholic and independent schools. The next example of this is later this month with the international day of action against homophobia, and we are inviting students in years 10, 11 and 12 from all ACT school sectors—public, Catholic and independent—to attend a major summit in relation to that important issue.

In the ACT student numbers amongst the different sectors, or market share if you like, have been one of the closest of all jurisdictions. As Mr Doszpot indicated in his contribution, data from the February 2011 ACT schools census shows that there were just over 39,000 students attending public schools, 13,786 in independent schools and 13,348 attending Catholic schools. This distribution of students clearly makes collaboration between the sectors even more important.

It is important to note, though, in looking at the break-up of students within the three sectors that our public schools have the largest enrolments of students with special needs and the largest enrolments of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds at 1,848 and 1,283 respectively. Independent schools, the census shows, have 99 students identifying as Indigenous and 224 with special needs. The Catholic system has 187 students identifying as Aboriginal and 276 students with special needs.

The government has delivered record funding in this budget to Catholic and independent schools in the ACT. Over the term of this government, funding for our Catholic and independent schools has increased from \$29.6 million in 2001-02 to nearly \$50 million in 2011-12. This is an increase of approximately \$20 million, or around 66 per cent, which is, I note, well above CPI increases over this time.

I acknowledge, though, that funding is an important issue for schools and for governments, and the ACT is no different from any other state or territory government in this country. The ACT government will continue to promote engagement with the commonwealth review of funding for schooling, to which all Australian governments have agreed.

The review, known in shorthand terms as the Gonski review, marks the first time since 1973 that funding arrangements for all schools have been reviewed in such a holistic fashion by our national government. The review is being held to ensure funding for all schools is fair and transparent, financially sustainable and effective in promoting excellent educational outcomes for all Australian students.

The ACT government is preparing a comprehensive submission to the review of funding of schooling. It is currently being finalised, so I will not be pre-empting our

submission here this morning. But I can advise the Assembly that we have consulted deeply with the independent and Catholic school sectors and that there is a lot of common ground across the public and non-government school sectors that will be incorporated into the ACT government response.

However, given this government's record of education investment, it would be very safe to say that we will continue to fight for our fair share of funding for all ACT schools, not simply the Catholic schools. Further, this government will continue to argue, as we always done, that the most important determinant of school funding should be student need and that any funding model should have that criterion as its highest consideration.

As I have mentioned earlier and on many occasions in my contributions on the education portfolio, it is clear—and I hope that there is agreement on this—that the ACT has a rich, collaborative culture between school sectors. As I have indicated, the Teacher Quality Institute is one of those important collaborations. The institute brings the teaching community together under one umbrella. The Teacher Quality Institute will ensure all our teachers in public, Catholic and independent schools meet the new national professional standards so that we as a community can continue to have confidence in the quality of teachers in ACT schools and in the quality of the teaching profession. The institute provides us with a means for ensuring that all teachers in the ACT are given the same opportunities to be their best. This in turn benefits all students.

Similarly, government and non-government schools are collaborating to implement the Australian curriculum. In March this year school leaders from across public, Catholic and independent schools joined together in a cross-sectoral leadership forum to discuss best practice in implementing the curriculum. Ensuring the best outcomes for students was the common goal, and ideas and best practice were shared and discussed.

The government continues to work in partnership with Catholic and independent sectors to ensure ACT students receive the best possible education through, as I have mentioned, the safe schools task force, the Non-government Schools Education Council and the COAG cross-sectoral education committee to improve teaching in literacy and numeracy, to develop innovative teacher education excellence in the territory and, importantly, to deliver the youth commitment which ensures that every young person is learning or earning until they complete year 12 or equivalent qualifications.

To drill down to the classroom teacher level, there is a long history of cooperation between teachers from the three school sectors. This collaboration has been a critical part of the development of the years 11 and 12 ACT curriculum framework and its moderation processes in language teaching, gifted and talented education, vocational education and training, the arts and interschool and interdistrict sport.

In short, we have developed the Teacher Quality Institute together. We are delivering the ACT youth commitment to ensure all young people are learning or earning, and we are doing it together. We are implementing the Australian curriculum together. We

are working closely to achieve targets articulated in our national partnerships together. We are ensuring that our schools remain safe together. We want to continue to work together to ensure the smooth rollout of a number of new Australian government initiatives and to build on the success recent Australian government initiatives, such as the building the education revolution program. I can confidently say that we have a strong cross-sectoral relationship and collaboration between public, Catholic and independent schools.

It is worth noting—and I acknowledge that Mr Doszpot did in his speech—that ACT students across all sectors, are high performers. The recent 2010 national NAPLAN report has confirmed this, showing that mean scores for ACT students across all years and all areas tested were above the national mean. ACT students excelled in reading, performing significantly ahead of the national mean. There was a marked improvement in writing. Year 3 scores were significantly higher than other jurisdictions, and results for years 5, 7 and 9 were the equal highest in the country. The percentage of students in the top two band levels of achievement was higher in the ACT than the national average. These are, indeed, excellent results and testament to the quality teachers working in our schools and the continued focus on school improvement and teacher development across all school sectors.

I am sure you and other members of the Assembly are acutely aware of this government's active and interested participation in the development of the My School website. For the first time, the most recent edition of this valuable resource provided information that lets parents and the community know how their school has progressed in NAPLAN testing over time. It is this information, combined with the demographic and the newly incorporated school finance information, that enables parents and interested observers to actively participate in driving improvement in their school in partnership with their school.

This data is disaggregated into state and territory and commonwealth funding and is provided at a level that enables parents to see both the quantum of funding provided at a school and a student level. In responding to Mr Doszpot's motion, I would encourage him to examine the My School website, as for each school across our country, not just in the ACT, we are now able to see financial information relating to the individual school of interest.

The ACT community is rightly proud of the quality of our public, Catholic and independent schools, and the ACT government shares that pride. Schools in the ACT provide parents with a rich choice when it comes to education. All of our school sectors are strong performers—strong in student numbers, strong in student academic success and strong in collaboration. The government will continue to be a strong supporter of them all.

I would encourage in this week the Assembly to reflect upon and celebrate Catholic schools. I am certainly looking forward to attending the opening of the Merici college garden on Friday morning. I would also ask members of the Assembly to make a moment to celebrate the achievements of all schools in all sectors in the ACT on each day.

With that, Mr Speaker, I formally move the amendment I have circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “demographic range of students; and” in subparagraph (1)(f), substitute:

“(1) (g) that the MySchool website provides comprehensive disaggregated data of per student funding in monetary terms from ACT and Commonwealth Government sources to ACT schools; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) work to ensure that the ACT schools sector continues to operate in a collaborative and co-operative fashion for the benefit of ACT students; and

(b) make representations to the Review of Funding for Schooling seeking to ensure:

(i) a fair share of funding for all ACT schools, including Catholic schools; and

(ii) that any school funding model is centred on student need.”.

It goes to note that the My School website provides the comprehensive disaggregated data that Mr Doszpot is seeking in terms of ACT and commonwealth government resources and calls on the government to work to ensure that all schools continue to operate in a collaborative and cooperative fashion for the benefit of ACT students. It requires us to make representations, as we will, to the review of funding for schooling to seek to ensure a fair share of funding for all ACT schools, including Catholic schools, and it notes that any school funding model should be centred on student need.

I hope that this amendment is something that will attract the support of all parties in this place. I think it is a fair and reasonable amendment that recognises the importance of providing a fair share of funding for all schools and all students in the ACT. I commend my amendment to Mr Doszpot’s motion to the Assembly.

**MS HUNTER** (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Convenor, ACT Greens) (10.30): The Greens support educational choice and, as a party, have long held the view that quality and accessible education is the right of every Australian child. Catholic schools certainly play a role in the education of Australian students, including here in the territory. And I note that just over a quarter of students attend Catholic systemic schools. It is also well known that a growing number of students attending Catholic schools are not in fact Catholics themselves, and this demonstrates that Catholic schools are providing an education that is regarded outside of its religious base.

The Catholic Education Office is responding to the needs of families in growth areas. Currently a Catholic high school is being built in Gungahlin, and by 2013, when the school is set to open, there will be a Catholic education option from preschool to year 12. Currently there are four secondary schools, 24 primary schools and two early

learning centres in the ACT. Additionally, there are congregational schools—Daramalan, St Edmund’s and Marist college—located in the ACT.

I note that the philosophy of Catholic education is as follows: Catholic schools seek to contribute to the creation of an Australian community that is highly educated, skilled and cultured, with an ability to promote and embrace a critical analysis of social issues, the expansion of knowledge and the pursuit of truth. Such a community will be marked by a vigorous intellectual and cultural life, accessible to all. They also support the principle that education has individual and private benefits, and it is also very much a public good whose benefits enhance the whole community. Catholic schools emphasise the contribution of education to the common good of the Australian community.

The Greens very much believe that education is a public good. Our policies and positions have long supported a public education system that is well funded and provides high-quality education to students regardless of their background or ability. I am pleased to read on the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese website states:

The Catholic school is open to all who are willing to commit to support the philosophy, values and aims of Catholic schooling. No student will be refused enrolment because of an inability, as distinct from an unwillingness, of a parent/guardian to meet financial requirements.

It is welcome news to the Greens that Catholic schools welcome those who wish to share their ethos.

The Greens agree with Mr Dozspot’s motion that all parents must have the right to make decisions about their children’s education. Choice is a very important thing. In our largely well-resourced community, local parents have a choice on a number of things and exercise it, including choice of education and school. I note that a quarter of parents are choosing the Catholic system for their children.

The Greens, as I said, do support a strong public system as a cornerstone of our education system. Just like in health, we believe that the public health system provides an essential resource to the majority of Australians. It is about ensuring that there is access to education and to health that does not rely on other prerequisites such as payment.

I believe that Mr Doszpot is a little pre-emptive regarding the federal funding. We all understand that there is a national funding review underway. The Gonski review has begun and has a number of well-known Australians taking part in it. I understand that lobbying is quite intense from all sectors. I understand that the vast majority of educators are passionate about the service they provide, and funding certainty is very important to offering a high-quality service into the future.

Whilst I understand the concerns of educators from all sectors, I believe that the national review needs to be allowed to take place. I do not envy the federal government in the decisions that they will need to make to fund education that offers

Australian families choice and reflects current trends while resourcing a strong and responsive public education system.

The Canberra Liberals have had much to say about the Greens and our education policies, and I state here today that the Greens' policies are longstanding and well known. We believe in a system that is just, that is based on equity and that is accessible to all. We note the choices that families across the ACT are making regarding Catholic and independent schools and will respond to this as the outcomes of the Gonski review are known.

I note that Mr Doszpot is calling on the government to provide information regarding funding. The revision of the My School website released only a couple of months ago provides financial information on all schools. In fact it was a little bit controversial in some sectors.

On a quick glance, I selected three schools quite randomly: St John Vianney's in Weston, Aranda primary and Canberra Girls Grammar. I found that the per student net recurrent income was \$8,288 for St John Vianney's, \$9,743 for Aranda primary and \$17,803 for Canberra Girls Grammar. I am unsure of what this means, and I do not know that these figures actually impact on the quality of education or teaching staff at any of these schools or any others, for that matter. I do note a considerable difference in the funding per student, and we would certainly draw conclusions regarding that.

My point is that this information is available, and I would urge Mr Doszpot to have a look at that but also to understand that part of the reason why we are supporting Mr Barr's amendment is that it is already publicly available.

The Greens will not be supporting all of the Liberals' motion today. We will be, as I said, supporting Mr Barr's amendment. We believe that the national review must run its course. I note that Dr Dan White, executive director of Sydney's Catholic schools, recently stated:

Equity excellence and choice should be the guiding principles for the way governments—both state and federal—fund schools, not a particular ideology.

The Greens acknowledge that this is a very important point. This is in fact why there are so many challenges before the Gonski review and why the horse-trading and demands in Mr Doszpot's motion are not, I guess, helpful at this stage and are probably are, as I said, a little pre-emptive.

The Greens have shown support for, and will continue to support, education choice, including that of Catholic schools. We understand the needs of the local community and that a considerable number of Canberra families choose Catholic and independent education. As I have stated, the responsiveness of Catholic education to the needs of growing communities, especially the new school that will be built in Gungahlin, is to be welcomed.

Today the Greens will be supporting the amendment, as I said, put forward by Minister Barr, and we are doing this because we believe that the government has put

forward a sensible and appropriate set of words that recognises the importance of collaboration, cooperation and, particularly, fairness. Fairness is something that we all acknowledge, and I believe we have progressed in our debate around education past the public and private divide, as mentioned by the minister.

Our children and their educators deserve a funding arrangement that has certainty and is based on the foundations of a high-quality and accessible education system for every student, whether they live in Weetangera or Wilcannia. The Greens will keep these principles central to our education response, something we have done for many years now. I look forward to the outcomes of the Gonski review and continuing dialogue over the critical issue of education funding.

I would like to congratulate all Catholic schools here in the territory. I know that they will be having a great week celebrating Catholic Schools Week, and they are playing an important part in education delivery here in the territory.

But to go back to the amendment, it is important as far as that federal review of education funding is concerned. I would be expecting the ACT government to be championing it, to be advocating it on behalf of all sectors—the public sector, the independent schools sector, the Catholic systemic sector, which all make up, I guess, the mosaic of education choice here in the territory. We do need to see how that all pans out.

We do know, as Minister Barr has mentioned, that most of those children who are students with disability and most of those children who are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, are being educated in our public education system, along with many thousands of other children from a variety of backgrounds. So it also plays an important part as a major provider of education here in the ACT.

I have had the privilege of going out to visit some Catholic schools and have also enjoyed going along to Marist on a couple of occasions and running some short workshops on democracy, the Assembly and what we do here, usually to about 50 or 60 year 4 or year 5, quite young, boys, which has always been a lot of fun. I have always found that they had some incredibly insightful and interesting questions to put to me around what happens here in the ACT as far governance is concerned, how this place works and so forth. And so I do look forward to going out and being part of those workshops.

Again, congratulations to those Catholic schools which continue to support their communities, which continue to support the families and the students, which produce students who educationally are doing very well and, as Mr Doszpot mentioned, which are also doing well in other areas such as football codes. St Eddie's has got a long tradition and is well known for its rugby. A couple of my cousins attended St Eddie's and were very much part of starting the dance culture there that culminated in St Edmund's participating in the dance extravaganza types of events. That provided another way for young men to be able to participate in something that was not necessarily on the rugby field, and I think it did add to that school. They certainly enjoyed their time at St Edmund's.

So, again, congratulations to all of those Catholic schools and I hope they have a wonderful week of celebration.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (10.42): If the Catholic school community were looking for a quick, clear and unequivocal commitment to improved funding, or at least maintaining the existing level of funding for Catholic schools, they will get it from one party today, and one party only, and that is the Liberal Party. There is nothing in Mr Barr's amendment, or in Ms Hunter's support for that amendment, that will give any certainty to those groups. And I think that is a shame.

In some ways it is hypocritical to get up and say, "Yes, we support you but we won't give you the funding to allow your good deeds to be done, and to be done even better." That is the genesis or the nub of the amendment moved by Mr Barr.

Ms Hunter started by saying that the Greens support educational choice. What she did not go on to say was that they would support that with funding. You only have to go back to some of the Greens' commitments at the federal election in their national policy to see that, for instance, one of the goals that the Australian Greens want is:

Schools funding to be placed on an equitable footing by reversing the excessive increases in Commonwealth funding to non-government schools in recent years.

The pejorative language is quite interesting because it assumes that the "excessive increases" means that they are now overfunded when the reality is that, for the majority of non-government schools—and that includes the Catholic schools—they still receive less government support than the government funded system. And there is your question.

So what do the Greens mean by saying "schools funding to be placed on an equitable footing"? Equitable, I would have thought, meant a fair distribution among all. But clearly that does not occur here. When you use words like "reversing the excessive increases to non-government schools in recent years", it just seems to cast a slur. So it is easy to get up and say, "We support them," but if you are genuine in your support then you will leave the motion as it is.

What is the effect of Mr Barr's amendment? Mr Doszpot, in part (2)(a), calls on the Minister for Education and Training and the Treasurer to make representations to the commonwealth government to ensure that the funding for this sector does not decrease in real terms. He is not even asking for more; he is just saying, "Don't take it away from a sector that is under pressure, that is struggling, because it isn't funded to the same level as the government sector."

It is interesting that, when you take into account the figures spent per student, particularly in Catholic schools, a large part of that contribution is from the parents. The parents pay taxes, both at the federal and at the state level, get less for their students in a Catholic school and then pay again by topping it up with fees. That is a choice that we make. But if you want to talk about equity, let us talk about equity and let us talk about the double standard implicit in that.

What Mr Doszpot rightly calls for in (2)(a), acknowledging the review, is that it does not go down: do not decrease. In (b) he calls on the commonwealth and ACT governments to ensure that Catholic schools continue to be an accessible choice for parents to educate their children. Part of that accessibility is making sure that there is money available in all three parts of the education spectrum for those kids with special needs.

It is an interesting argument. This furphy is put out that the Catholic system is not pulling its weight in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and that it is not pulling its weight for kids with disabilities. Parents make the choice based on the assistance that they get. If there is a lot more money in the government system, why wouldn't you put your child there?

Why don't we reverse that and say, "Let's make sure that all students with special needs, it doesn't matter where they are in the system, get the assistance they deserve"? How equitable would that be? Gee, I think that is equity: "It doesn't matter where you are, we will assist you." So do not get up and snidely say: "The fight between the three sectors is over and we all support Catholic education. But, gee, they're not pulling their weight in regard to Aboriginal and TI kids and they're not pulling their weight in regard to kids with a disability."

I know that the Catholic Education Office take this issue very seriously because I know of a young student. I have spoken to the special education teacher that the CEO send, for instance, to my son's school to assist kids there. They go out of their way to do what they can within the resources that they have. Then you get these snide criticisms that they are not doing enough and they are not pulling their weight. If they have not got the resources, they can only do what they can do. So if you are concerned that some of the numbers do not match up, give them some resources to make the numbers match up. That would be a significant shift to equity.

When you look at what Mr Doszpot is trying to say, he is saying, "Let's make sure it's accessible, let's make sure the funding doesn't go backwards." But what does Mr Barr say? Mr Barr's amendment says:

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) work to ensure that the ACT schools sector continues to operate in a collaborative and co-operative fashion for the benefit of ACT students; and
- (b) make representations to the Review of Funding for Schooling seeking to ensure:
  - (i) a fair share of funding for all ACT schools, including Catholic schools; and
  - (ii) that any school funding model is centred on student need."

I do not think it is the same thing. In fact, I know it is not the same thing. If the government truly believed the rhetoric, they would say: "Yes, Mr Doszpot, it is

Catholic Schools Week. Yes, we understand that they aren't funded to the same level as the government sector. And yes, we will make those representations that you asked for." That would be a minister interested in equity, that would be a Greens party interested in equity and that would be a unanimous view then from this Assembly. But we will not get that unanimous view today, and it is unfortunate that it is that way.

Mr Barr quoted figures—the old “lies, damned lies and statistics” line. He said, “Yes, it was \$29 million worth of assistance and now it's over \$50 million; haven't we done well?” But what is it as a percentage of the education budget? My understanding is that the percentage of change has not gone up at all. It is still at roughly the same percentage that it was 10 years ago. With respect to somehow trying to gloss this by saying, “Yes, we've put in more money,” we know you have put in more money. The budget has doubled, as the Treasurer told us this morning. The budget has doubled in the last 10 years.

Based on that, \$30 million to \$50 million is not doubling, so perhaps in real terms the government's contribution to the Catholic sector of education in this city may have gone back. I do not know because the minister does not present the full figure. The minister might like to go away; we will give him leave to speak again to tell us what the percentage has done and what the real terms growth is against all the factors.

But he picks these two numbers and says: “Look, aren't we good? It's gone up \$20 million.” What percentage growth has there been in the Catholic school population in the last 10 years? We know that, throughout the first decade of this century, there was a flood out of the government system. Despite the best endeavours of the minister to say that that flood has been arrested, it may have been slowed but it certainly has not been arrested.

**Mr Doszpot:** Under Labor there has been, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Under Labor, the flood has occurred. But present the full picture. How much did the Catholic sector grow in terms of numbers? What is the budget allocation per student et cetera? It is very easy to quote a raw number. We are used to that from this minister. You get the number that suits him, instead of him taking his job seriously.

I am not surprised that the Greens will be supporting the amendment. They say the words but they actually do not believe in the Catholic education sector. Yet we hear the words: “We've been. We've seen the programs at Eddie's for dance. Good on you.” I proudly say that the programs for dance for boys started at Marist probably a decade before St Edmund's got there. Each of the schools that we have, whether they are in the government, the independent or the—

**Mr Seselja:** Really? I didn't know Marist was good at dancing.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, Marist is good at dancing. Jan Carey, who used to run SIDS and Kids here, ran dance programs at Marist probably 20 years ago.

**Ms Gallagher:** Didn't you go to Marist?

**Mr Seselja:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** No, definitely not a Marist boy. But all three sectors, all three parts of the educational spectrum, work towards the betterment of our society through the education of young Canberrans. All three have fabulous things that they add. All three have distinguished themselves in aspects that make all three sectors valuable.

If we are serious about equity and if we are serious about a minister standing up for all students—he says the fight is over. The fight is not over when we do not have equity in funding. The fight is not over when choice is denied to some parents because of the only place they can get disability funding. I will look forward to the explanation of the \$5 million a year for disability education—how much of that is going to the independent schools and how much is going to the Catholic schools. It will be interesting to see. Again, the minister can have leave to explain whether it is being delivered in an equitable way or whether it is just going to one sector. And that is the problem.

This is a good motion. I think the words people have said highlight that we all understand, during Catholic Schools Week, how important the Catholic school sector is. I think the theme of the week, about the journey and the education, is good. I think we all know that various schools do things differently, and I think it would be worth while for the Assembly to support this motion unamended.

**MR SESELJA** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.52): It is a real pleasure to get up and support this motion today as a proud MacKillop Catholic college product, not as—

**Ms Gallagher:** Dancing?

**MR SESELJA:** Well, there has been talk about dancing. I do not know whether MacKillop is known well for dancing. We did pretty well at Rock Eisteddfod, but I do not think that my contribution to Rock Eisteddfod could be classified as dancing.

**Ms Gallagher:** I'd like to see that.

**MR SESELJA:** *Zulu* circa 1993, I think. Look out for that in the archives.

**Mr Barr:** Before YouTube.

**MR SESELJA:** Before YouTube, indeed—mercifully. Aren't we all grateful that we missed most of that in our high school years?

**Mr Barr:** That might be something there is unanimous agreement on in this place.

**MR SESELJA:** Indeed. But getting back to the manner at hand, Catholic Schools Week is a chance for the communities of all Catholic schools in the ACT and New South Wales to celebrate the many opportunities that such schools provide. In the ACT roughly 17,500 students, or approximately 26 per cent of our student population,

from 32 Catholic schools and colleges will be taking part in these celebrations. It is an opportunity for these schools to showcase what is good about their respective schools and to invite the community to see firsthand these schools' contributions to the learning and development of our children. As such, if you have the opportunity to take part in some of these events, I would encourage all members of the Assembly to see for themselves how these schools punch above their weight in delivering a quality education to their students.

As many would already know, Catholic schools have a proud tradition of educating students from wide socioeconomic backgrounds. I think it is worth reflecting on that and pointing it out. That was my experience and that is still the experience of Catholic schools—that they are not some bastion of the rich. They are not there for the elites. They are there for anyone who shares their ethos, whether they be Catholic or whether they simply want to receive some of the values that are imparted at a Catholic school. I think many parents have embraced that, from all backgrounds, and I think that we see that.

When I go to MacKillop Catholic college, as I did recently for their opening mass, I see what diversity there is in that very large school community. In that very vibrant school community we see just how much diversity there is both in people's religious backgrounds and in their socioeconomic backgrounds. I think the Catholic sector have always been very proud of the fact that they cater to anyone who wants to come and share in what Catholic schools believe, whatever their background. They do not exclude people because they are not Catholic. They do not exclude people because they come from particular areas. They are certainly not a bastion of the rich. That is at the heart of much of this debate.

What we are seeing with this amendment, which is going to be supported by the Greens and the Labor Party today, is a selling out of the Catholic sector. It is saying to the Catholic schools, "Well, you're on your own." It is very rare that you would have a situation where the ACT government would be prepared not to in any way try and influence the federal government in a decision which would affect large numbers here in the ACT.

Roughly 40 per cent of kids are educated in non-government schools and around a quarter of all kids in Canberra are educated in Catholic schools. Surely we should all be standing together. If you were fair dinkum about supporting the Catholic sector and the non-government sector and choice in education you would be saying to the commonwealth that they should not be taking money away. But we know that is on the cards. It is a long Labor tradition. We know the Greens' position. The Greens' position is utterly hostile to the non-government sector. It is utterly hostile to the values that they have and to their ability to exist and to the funding that they receive. We have seen that time and time again.

The Labor Party have been amazingly conflicted on this, but we have seen the true colours emerge from time to time. Most recently in federal politics we saw it with Mark Latham's hit list. We have seen that debate within the Labor Party for years. For years they would not even support any government funding for non-government schools. They were completely anti the Catholic school sector. They only, I think,

under Whitlam, due to electoral realities, came around to the idea that maybe there should be some funding. But that hostility is still there.

We can go back and we can look at what the ACT Labor Party's position is. We know that about 50 per cent of the ACT Labor Party, whether it is the caucus or whether it is the broader party, believe that non-government schools should get no funding. Half of the Labor Party, including half the caucus—including ministers like Katy Gallagher and Simon Corbell—voted for a motion that would have denied any funding to non-government schools and that actually attacked all non-government schools, whether they be Muslim schools, Catholic schools or Anglican schools. Whatever the school, if they were non-government, that motion attacked them.

So let us just be clear on where the Labor Party stands on non-government schools and the Catholic sector. They pay lip-service to them from time to time, but they are against them. They do not support them. They do not support that sector. They are hostile to that sector and it comes through. It is coming through again today, unfortunately. Unfortunately—

**Mr Hanson:** Which way did Simon Corbell vote?

**MR SESELJA:** Mr Corbell, of course, is anti the Catholic sector. He voted against the motion. The whole left of the Labor Party here voted for that condemning motion of non-government schools—all non-government schools. Whatever their background—whether they be religious schools or whether they be ethnic schools—they were written off as being divisive. We do not believe they are divisive.

What we are arguing here for today is that we simply stand up to the federal government and say, “Don't take away their funding.” We are not saying, “Give them a whole stack more cash.” That would, of course, be welcome, but we are saying as a baseline that surely we can agree that they should be able to have their funding maintained in real terms. That is what the Canberra Liberals believe.

**Mr Barr:** That's what the Prime Minister said from the start.

**MR SESELJA:** Well, no. We are hearing very different messages. If that is what the Prime Minister said, and if the minister was confident that was going to be the case, he would have no trouble supporting the words of this motion. But the Labor Party and the Greens have today chosen to oppose a motion that would simply call for Catholic schools in the ACT not to be defunded. We have a clear divide here, don't we, Madam Deputy Speaker? We have a clear divide because the Canberra Liberals say, “Yes, we will push for the federal government; we should lobby to protect schools here in Canberra, just as we would lobby to protect government schools in Canberra if they were facing cuts from the commonwealth.”

**Mr Barr:** Why won't you support my amendment then?

**MR SESELJA:** There are weasel words across the chamber from Andrew Barr. He has walked away from the sector again. I would say to all those Catholic schools, “When he comes to your school this week or next week or another time, ask him why

he doesn't support your funding being maintained." I would say to the principals of MacKillop, Merici, St Edmund's, Marist, St Clare of Assisi, St Francis Xavier, Holy Spirit, Good Shepherd and St Matthew's—any of the Catholic schools or any of the non-government schools in Canberra—"When Andrew Barr or a Labor Party representative or a Greens' representative comes and pretends that they support your school, ask them whether they support your funding. Ask them how they voted when it was put to them that they should stand up and say, 'You shouldn't have your funding ripped away from you'." It will be interesting to see how far they back away from their vote here today. But we will remind them, Madam Deputy Speaker. So I will just put that message out there: do not believe the rhetoric from the Labor Party and the Greens. When they come to your school ask them why they want to rip funding away. Ask them why they are they comfortable with the federal government ripping funding away.

We know that the Labor Party has been hostile over time. We know that sometimes far more sensible voices in the Labor Party have prevailed. We call on those sensible voices within federal Labor—and if any of them are left within ACT Labor—to actually stand up for what they say they believe. We will make it unequivocal. We believe the federal government should not be taking funding away from our schools. We will stand up for that. We will put our vote in the Assembly to that effect. The Labor Party and the Greens have walked away from that. They have sold out these schools. This week, in Catholic Schools Week, they have sold out the Catholic schools sector. At these events I look forward to hearing from Andrew Barr and the other Labor and Greens' representatives as to why they have sold the sector out.

Question put:

That **Mr Barr's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10

Noes 5

Mr Barr	Ms Hunter	Mr Coe	Mr Smyth
Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Doszpot	
Ms Burch	Ms Porter	Mr Hanson	
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Seselja	
Mr Hargreaves	Mr Stanhope		

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

**MR DOSZPOT** (Brindabella) (11.06): I just rise to express my disappointment in both the government and the Greens for stepping back from this motion which was reflecting on Catholic Schools Week and asking for nothing more than that this Assembly actually give some comfort, some measure of support, for the non-government sector and calling on the Minister for Education and Training and the Treasurer to make representation to the commonwealth government to ensure that

funding for this sector does not decrease in real terms. It is not a very difficult decision to make, Mr Barr. I am very sorry to hear that you are not strong enough in your internal ability to ensure that your party will carry that motion.

I also have to express a lot of disappointment that the Treasurer, handing down the budget yesterday in her 40-minute speech, and quite a detailed speech regarding education, made not one mention of the non-government education sector at all. I guess that goes to underline the reason for our calling on the government and the Greens to support our motion to raise this issue quite aptly during Catholic Schools Week.

I am very disappointed, but I guess I should say that none of us are surprised at the way in which the Greens and Labor have combined to show their true colours with regard to the non-government sector and, in this case, the Catholic education sector in particular. Obviously we have not supported Mr Barr's amendment on this.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Animal Welfare Legislation Amendment Bill 2011**

Debate resumed from 6 April 2011, on motion by **Ms Le Couteur**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**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) (11.09): The government certainly agrees that there is benefit in reviewing the current arrangements for the breeding and the sale of dogs and cats within the ACT. However, as I think everybody in this place knows, the government commenced work in this area with a commitment to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to undertake a full consultation—long before the Greens flagged that they would leap ahead to legislate on this issue.

I asked the members of the AWAC, a quorum of key community stakeholders in this area, to do work on the issue of mandatory codes of practice. I made that request of them in 2010 and the AWAC are currently pursuing that investigation, I understand, completing a draft mandatory enforceable code of practice which will govern the sale of animals in the ACT.

Ms Le Couteur is aware that I made that undertaking to the committee. Ms Le Couteur is aware that the committee are working through a consultative process on developing that draft of an enforceable code of practice and she is aware that they propose to have that paper ready for release, I believe, in the next month or two. Separately, Ms Mary Porter is developing a discussion paper on complementary measures to encourage responsible pet ownership. She is liaising with AWAC and with other stakeholders in the process.

Ms Le Couteur and her colleagues today, the Greens, would say that they have consulted on this issue and that they have consulted enough. The Greens are

essentially asking that I and the government revoke our undertakings to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, that I revoke my undertakings to this Assembly and that I revoke my undertakings to the people of the territory to consult with them on the first-ever mandatory code of practice for animal welfare to be crafted in the ACT. Ms Le Couteur and her colleagues today would say that Ms Porter should revoke her undertaking in relation to the discussion paper which she initiated before the Greens introduced this legislation, should revoke her undertaking to consult with the people of Canberra.

The ACT Greens are fully aware that these processes were in place, that they are underway, and it is a matter of enormous regret that they have chosen to undermine the process of consultation with the Canberra community. It is regrettable that they have chosen to show such disrespect to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee in the way that they have.

The government has in discussions over the last few days sought to have this matter adjourned, that it not be brought on today. It is being brought on today. The government has made its position to the Greens very clear—that we are not prepared to support this bill in this environment. The government's position is, quite simply, that we will not support it.

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (11.12): The Canberra Liberals oppose the Animal Welfare Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

When it comes down it, I do not believe this bill will significantly improve the welfare of animals in the territory and I too am not happy with the process that has been followed.

This bill, I believe, is much more about the Greens grandstanding than it is about the general welfare of animals in the territory. At its best this bill is irresponsible and at its worst it is a vendetta on the pet industry which I believe serves our community well. It is an attack on the thousands of Canberrans who have bought animals from pet stores and who are happy and responsible pet owners.

In Canberra and elsewhere people acquire animals from a number of sources such as pet stores; animal shelters, including the RSPCA; and breeders. In mentioning the RSPCA I acknowledge the presence of Michael Linke, who is in the gallery. Michael is a tireless advocate for animal welfare and, whilst I do disagree with him on this particular bill, I very much respect his commitment to the cause and I look forward to seeing him and others at the Million Paws Walk on 15 May.

For this bill to focus on pet stores, which at most provide about 15 per cent of cats or dogs to the market, is irresponsible. Therefore, with this bill to target pet stores the Greens are implying a correlation between the sale of cats and dogs from pet stores and problems with animals thereafter. So, in effect, what the Greens are saying is that people that purchase cats and dogs from pet stores pose a greater risk to their animals and to their community than those that acquire their animals from elsewhere. This is absurd and is an attack on thousands of Canberrans who are responsible pet owners and who have sought the confidence and reduced risk that purchasing an animal from a pet store can provide.

To suggest that families go along to a pet store and spend upwards of \$500 or \$600 on a cat or a dog impulsively—that is, without thinking of the consequences—is absurd. To suggest that pet stores are irresponsibly selling animals is unfounded, as there has not been one prosecution against pet retail operators in the ACT over the last four years.

The ACT has an Animal Welfare Advisory Committee which is in place to deal with the issues raised in this bill. As a principle I believe legislation should be a last resort and I do not believe that all such avenues have been fully explored.

Finally, proposed section 9B, which is to ban intensive pig farming in the ACT, of which there is none, is bizarre and highlights once again that this bill is about the Greens being more concerned with politics than with genuine animal welfare. What other activities not taking place in the territory at the moment should we also seek to ban? Should we ban commercial whaling? Should we move to make Lake Burley Griffin an officially recognised whale sanctuary? I joke, but really—

**Ms Bresnan:** You do joke.

**MR COE:** it is a flippant approach to legislation—

**Mr Rattenbury:** You are a joke.

**MR COE:** which I think is very dangerous and not a path that we should be going down. There are other issues in this legislation—

**Mr Hanson:** I raise a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker. Mr Rattenbury just called out that Mr Coe is a joke. I would ask that you consider whether that is parliamentary or not and, if you deem that it is not, ask that he withdraw that comment.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Hargreaves): Mr Rattenbury, I invite you to withdraw that comment if indeed you made it. I did not hear it but I invite you to withdraw it if you did.

**Mr Rattenbury:** I withdraw the comment.

**MR COE:** Thank you, Mr Assistant Speaker. As devastating a blow as it was, I will continue.

There are other issues in this legislation and the majority of these issues are currently before the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, which is the appropriate forum for such policy discussions to be had. I suggest we allow the committee to do what it was established to do and to give it time to do this job. I am not saying that I would unilaterally endorse what it decides but I do respect its processes and I welcome its consideration.

The Canberra Liberals will be opposing this bill.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (11.17): It is a great shame that we have not been able to achieve some support for this bill today, because Ms Le Couteur and her staff have put some considerable effort into developing this bill—

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a stunt.

**MR RATTENBURY:** and put considerable thought into the most successful way—

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a disgraceful stunt.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order, members, please.

**MR RATTENBURY:** and the most practical way—

**Mr Stanhope:** Disgraceful.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, please.

**MR RATTENBURY:** to improve animal welfare in the ACT. It is interesting the approach the Chief Minister has taken, because we were well aware of Ms Porter's promise, or at least her suggestion, that she was going to do something on this. I know that Ms Le Couteur waited for quite some time for Ms Porter's office to actually produce something. We did wait, and I recall very clearly that Ms Porter had promised to put out a discussion paper—a discussion paper, so not even actual legislation—by October last year, and Ms Le Couteur did not introduce her legislation until December. So we waited to see if Ms Porter was actually going to act. But unfortunately she did not. So the Greens, interested in action on this—not just promises of maybe doing something in the future, of having a discussion paper—

**Mr Stanhope:** No integrity.

**MR RATTENBURY:** of maybe sending it off somewhere for some consultation—

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Rattenbury. Stop the clock, please. Chief Minister, please desist. I am finding it very difficult to maintain order if you are going to carry on.

**Mr Stanhope:** I beg your pardon, Mr Assistant Speaker.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Mr Stanhope says that the Greens are coming in here asking him to revoke undertakings, to revoke commitments. But it is far from that. What we are asking for is for something to be done, and that is what this legislation is about. It is about practical, concrete steps that have received considerable support from people who work on animal welfare.

This is not about, as the Chief Minister suggested, some sort of disrespect. I am not sure who he thought we were disrespecting, but it is not about disrespect; it is about getting past the dithering. That is what we have seen in this area: we have seen dithering. This legislation has been—

**Mr Stanhope:** I raise a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker. I must say I do not think it is appropriate for Mr Rattenbury to allege that the members of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee are ditherers or that they are dithering in their consultation and their detailed consideration of these issues. It really is simply unacceptable to attack a group of community representatives in that way.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, there is no point of order. Mr Rattenbury.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Just to update the Assembly on that latest attempt to verbal from the Chief Minister, I certainly was not casting aspersions on that; I was casting aspersions on what the government has said about Ms Le Couteur's motivations.

But there has been considerable support for Ms Le Couteur's bill. Certainly the RSPCA have supported it. They said:

The legislation proposes a comprehensive approach to animal abandonment problems, covering issues such as breeding, selling, desexing, microchipping and advertising.

They went on to say:

... in a lot of ways it mirrors the RSPCA's ideal policy on the breeding, sale and licensing of companion animals.

A number of other groups from the ACT have also given support for the bill, including Dogs ACT and the Animal Sanctuary Rescue and Foster Group, as well as groups outside the ACT from across Australia, such as the Animal Welfare League of Queensland, the National Desexing Network, Hunter Animal Watch and Dog Homes of Tasmania, which is the state's largest dog welfare organisation. Support for the bill has also come from major NGOs that work on animal welfare and protection, such as Animals Australia and Voiceless, who said that the bill constitutes much needed reform in the area of animal protection in the ACT. So to suggest that there are deficiencies with Ms Le Couteur's bill does not correlate with what experts in the field are saying.

Now, of course, we are open to the government putting forward amendments, and we would be very happy for the bill to be supported in principle today and for the Assembly to make a commitment that we want to move forward on important areas of animal welfare law reform and then engage in a discussion about sorting out some of those details, because that is what the detail stage is for.

This bill has been on the table since December and it is now May. We are prepared to accept that it has been tough for the government to get organised in those four or five months and come up with a set of amendments. So we are prepared to put this off today, to agree to it in principle and then adjourn it to a later day so that we can give them a little bit more time to get organised and make some suggestions and negotiate over them. We are quite open to that.

It is important to talk about what we are voting against here today if we vote against this bill in principle. We are voting against the licensing of breeders. This means that we will continue the unlicensed breeding and selling of animals in the ACT. A licensing system works well elsewhere. The Greens spoke to those running a similar system of licensing on the Gold Coast and about the good results they are getting. We have even had representations from breeders overseas who have said that similar systems impose little extra burden on them and have improved the industry markedly.

In voting against this bill, the government and the Liberal Party are voting against controlling the free-for-all advertising that occurs every day in Canberra. We have animals being advertised in classifieds and sold at markets and fetes all over the place. This bill sought to improve that situation. The Liberal Party and the Labor Party are voting against point-of-sale desexing. It means that we will continue to have a problem with un-desexed animals, which leads to breeding and abandonment issues. We have talked to people who run shelters, and they will tell you that a lot of the problem is not from unowned animals but from litters surrendered by people whose animals, especially cats, have had litters. There are many studies to support the conclusions that a failure to desex animals is a major contributing factor to pet overpopulation and euthanasia.

In voting against this legislation today, the two old parties are voting against the regulation of pet stores. As Ms Le Couteur has said in the earlier debate, pet stores continue to operate without any enforceable code of practice. Puppy farms just over the border have been shut down, and it was discovered that they were supplying their animals to pet stores in Canberra.

Voting against this legislation today is voting against the banning of sow stalls. Mr Coe made some interesting comments on this when he said, "It's bizarre to ban something we don't do." I would put a contrary view: this is a practice that is well known to be cruel. It would not cost the ACT anything to outlaw this practice, and it will ensure that factory pig farming does not establish itself here.

It is a fairly simple principle. Those on the conservative side of politics often say, "Business needs certainty. They need to know what the operating framework is. We need to know the parameters we can operate in." Why do we not say clearly now that we do not want cruel sow stall farming in the ACT? It means it will never happen. It means that the business community has a clear set of understandings of what the rules are in the ACT and what this community expects when it comes to the welfare of animals. I think it is bizarre to not be clear about what our expectations are, but I guess that is a debate we are just going to have to keep having.

There is a number of things that in failing to support this bill in principle today the Labor Party and the Liberal Party are preventing from happening, things that will be positive for animal welfare in the ACT, things that mean we can put these improvements in place now. It is clear that the government are working on some of these issues; they have been for some time. As I say, unfortunately, it has reached a point where, frankly, in frustration, Ms Le Couteur has moved forward because the time lines keep getting passed. We will come to a motion later today under my name where I will talk about some of the other promises that have been made about doing

certain things by certain dates. Frankly, you start to wonder whether it is lack of political will, lack of resources or simply a case of the government not seeming to quite get around to these things.

Far from taking the approach that Mr Stanhope suggested, Ms Le Couteur has operated with integrity. She waited for her time frame to pass. Unfortunately it did pass, so Ms Le Couteur moved ahead, because we believe this is an important issue that needs to get something done about it. The other problem, of course, in not moving forward on this bill today is that it means we will now be in for a long wait, because under standing order 136 the Assembly will not be able to act on this issue again this year if this bill is voted down. That is the reality. It puts off action for some time into the future.

We could agree on this in principle today and then work on some details. If the government has specific improvements, the Greens are totally open to that. But because of some pigheaded commitment to “it has to be done our way or it’s the high way” we are going to come up against that unfortunate impasse. I think that is a sad situation for the Assembly; I think it is a sad situation for animal welfare in the ACT. I invite Mr Stanhope to reconsider his approach before we reach that point later this morning.

**MS BRESNAN** (Brindabella) (11.26): I too would like to speak in favour today of Ms Le Couteur’s bill. The aspersions cast on Ms Le Couteur and her motives behind this bill by Mr Stanhope today are outrageous, as Mr Rattenbury has already outlined. We have experienced this on other occasions with particular issues with the government. We have waited for quite some time for something to appear in relation to this bill. As Mr Rattenbury outlined and as Ms Le Couteur has spoken about on a number of occasions in relation to this bill, Ms Porter had a draft discussion paper. I say that it was a draft discussion paper. But again, we have not seen anything appear in relation to that.

I experienced a similar situation—I digress slightly—with the solarium legislation. The government said, “Oh, yes, it’s coming, it’s coming.” That happened for about a year and a half. We tabled legislation because we were sick of waiting, and, lo and behold, I think the day I tabled the legislation the government announced they were going to put in place regulations. So it is something we have experienced previously, and it gets to that point where you get sick of waiting for something to appear so you decide to progress and put forward something which is going to be of benefit to the ACT community, as this legislation is.

As Mr Rattenbury has outlined today, we offered to adjourn debate after agreeing in principle to this legislation. We did something similar with the drug-driving legislation that was put forward by Mr Hanson. We agreed to it in principle, we allowed the government to go through their process, and with that particular legislation they came back with a piece of legislation which was almost exactly the same as Mr Hanson’s. So we allowed that process, and we were more than willing to allow that happen in relation to animal welfare legislation. But, the government did not agree to do that.

Mr Stanhope was shouting across the chamber at Mr Rattenbury, saying, “It was your choice.” It was actually the government’s choice to go down this path we have today. We agreed to adjourn the debate after agreeing to this in principle to allow the government to go through the process, particularly given that the government was stating that in some way the Greens had not been through a proper process—which I will outline later—but that was not agreed to. Now we have the situation today where Ms Le Couteur’s legislation is going to get voted down because the government will not agree to what the Greens have put forward.

We have had points put forward about the Greens’ process in relation to consultation on this. Mr Rattenbury has already outlined—as Ms Le Couteur will, I am sure, in her speech—that the Greens received over 50 submissions in relation to this legislation. We spoke to the advisory council, and Mr Stanhope has mentioned that the advisory council is doing some work. I note that it is working on a particular issue in relation to animal welfare issues. There has been some discussion in the press release Mr Stanhope has put out today—and I will go to that shortly—and Mr Coe has also spoken about a number of points. Mr Coe has disappeared, which shows how seriously he takes this legislation.

One point that is very much focused on is the sale of pets in pet stores, and that is a part of the legislation. But as Mr Rattenbury has outlined, there are many parts to this legislation which go to a variety of animal welfare issues around the licensing of breeders, regulating of advertising, point-of-sale desexing and regulation of pet stores which have been the focus of some of the fairly outrageous statements we have heard today.

Mr Coe seems to think the banning of sow stalls is a great joke, but it is an extremely cruel practice. It would be a great step forward for the ACT to actually make a statement saying that we do not accept this practice in the ACT. But, again, we will not have that today.

Ms Le Couteur will, I am sure, outline some of the very positive statements we received in relation to this legislation, but I would just like to read out a couple of quotes from one particular submission from a pet store owner who offered strong support for this legislation:

Having worked in the pet industry as a shop owner and as an animal welfare advocate, I can vouch for the fact that it is near impossible for the required amount of policing to occur to uphold the minimal regulations in regard to pet sales that exist at the present. The only way to stop the mass breeding, irresponsible sale and continued abandonment of pets is to limit the sale of pets through shops to those supplied by welfare groups.

Further:

Having owned a pet shop, I am often amazed at the amount of ignorance among the general public as to where exactly pet shops source their animals and what health and regulatory conditions apply to the sale of them.

Another issue which has been put forward on a number of occasions, particularly by representatives of the pet store industry—and it seems to be repeated in Mr Stanhope's press release today—is the statement that, if this legislation came into practice and the sale of cats and dogs from pet stores was prevented, pet stores would be destroyed. That is clearly incorrect.

A number of pet stores already operate extremely successfully just selling pet products and accessories. One is PETstock in Fyshwick, but there are also stores in Phillip and Belconnen. PETstock is the fastest growing franchise of its kind in the country, and it does not sell animals. The argument that businesses would be destroyed if pet stores were not able to sell cats and dogs is incorrect, and we have absolute proof of that.

Mr Coe said that by putting forward what we are today the Greens are somehow attacking people who have bought animals from pet stores. That is an absolutely outrageous claim. If people buy pets and they are responsible pet owners, that is something we want to see. There are many responsible pet owners in the community, and we know that from the support we have received from the general public for this legislation.

I know people are probably sick of hearing me talk about this, but I was a volunteer at the RSPCA for a number of years and I saw the results of what happens when pets are bought on impulse from pet stores. People see puppies or kittens which are extremely cute, but then they take them home and realise that it is a lot of responsibility to look after them, and they grow older and they get bigger. People often do not realise the responsibility that is involved, which is why it is important to have these regulations.

I saw the result of what would happen particularly after Christmas and Mother's Day when numerous puppies were dumped at the RSPCA because people had bought them as gifts that were not wanted because they had not sought advice from the people they were buying them for or because they realised what was involved with owning pets.

This is not attacking people who buy pets; it is actually attacking the process which is in place around the sale of animals. They are a great responsibility, and it is important for people to recognise that. That is what this bill does. It is about putting in place those responsibilities and putting in place a strong process so that people are aware and so we do not get the situation where animals are bought on impulse and where organisations like the RSPCA have to pick up the pieces. That is not fair on the community and it is not fair on organisations like the RSPCA.

As I said, Mr Stanhope has put out a press release today. I have already addressed most of the points in that about stating that the Greens did not consult properly, that we have somehow circumvented a process and that we are seeking to destroy the pet industry. Ms Le Couteur will address those claims later, but the points I have made today show that they are completely incorrect.

Mr Coe said he did not think this would address animal welfare. I would like to hear him say what he thinks would address animal welfare issues. He said he does not

necessarily agree with some of the things Michael Linke has said and that he probably will not agree with some of the things that will come out of the advisory council. What does he think will improve animal welfare? I would very much like to hear that. He has treated today's bill like a bit of a joke, as he has with some of the other things that have been put forward. That is an indictment of Mr Coe in relation to these issues. He did not seem to have even looked at this bill in detail. He just talked about one aspect of it. It does not seem that he knows what is in the bill. It is an indictment of him that he thinks the protection of animals is such a joke. Many people in the community hold dear this issue, and it was very disappointing to hear him say that.

As I said, we are now in a situation where we will not have this strong legislation in place for the ACT. As Mr Rattenbury said, because of the standing orders, we may not see something for another year. We were prepared to have the bill agreed to in principle to allow the government to go through their processes and see what came out of that. If they had anything to put forward, they could have put forward amendments. They could have put forward other ideas, but, no, we will not have that.

We have seen the suggestion with some of the legislation or ideas the Greens have put forward that they are somehow radical and have never been heard of before. As Mr Rattenbury has already said, and as Ms Le Couteur has spoken out before, this is something which has been put in place. It has been trialled on the Gold Coast in Queensland and it has been put in place in other countries. It is something that has actually worked. It is not something radical. It is not something new. It is something that has worked before.

We have received 50 submissions, most of them in strong support of this legislation, and we should be progressing this today. It is a great shame that we will not be, but I commend Ms Le Couteur for her work. She has done this with great integrity, and any suggestion otherwise is quite outrageous. Anyone who knows Ms Le Couteur would know that it is not something that she would do. I commend this legislation. I congratulate Ms Le Couteur for putting it forward. It is a great shame we will not have it in place today in the ACT.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (11.38): As Ms Le Couteur and her colleagues are aware, I am very disappointed that this bill has been brought forward for debate today. To debate individual elements of this bill which the Greens have put forward as a package of animal welfare reform would be to dishonour the commitment I have personally made to a range of groups working in this sector in regard to a document I have been carefully developing and a broader consultation I have planned. As the Chief Minister has also stated, he has as well made undertakings to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, which have already done substantial work on a separate document. I am confident that this work will result in legitimate, workable and progressive proposals that will improve the welfare of animals in the territory. And of course it is very close to my heart that this happens.

If I were to support the passage of the Greens' animal welfare bill today I would be not only showing disrespect for the individuals and organisations to whom these undertakings have been made, I would also be choosing a path that I do not believe would lead to a better outcome for animals in the ACT. I do not think the Greens' bill

is ready. I do not think broad or equitable consultation has been undertaken. I do not think all stakeholders have been consulted around the table to come up with collective proposals, as is currently occurring at the table around which the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee sits.

Ms Le Couteur and her colleagues were aware of the work I was doing. The Greens were aware of the work the committee was doing. Indeed I would have welcomed a conversation with the Greens on these matters prior to the tabling of the exposure draft. I found Ms Le Couteur's action in tabling the exposure draft of her bill, without any notification, except at the eleventh hour, and without any discussion, surprising to say the least.

I reflect on our parliamentary agreement and reflect on the commitments it contains to work together in a spirit of cooperation in the best interests of the citizens of the ACT and to maintain a relationship characterised by mutual trust and respect, including frank and full disclosure of relevant information. As the Chief Minister has recalled, the Greens welcomed—

**Mr Stanhope:** No consultation, mate, that is the new rule, is it?

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Mr Hargreaves): Chief Minister, please! Ms Porter has the floor. Mr Rattenbury, please!

**Mr Rattenbury:** I am just laughing. I am sorry, Mr Assistant Speaker.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I know, Mr Rattenbury. From a Speaker's perspective, laughter from you in the chamber is unbecoming.

**MS PORTER:** As the Chief Minister has recalled, the Greens welcomed legislative amendments last year that would allow for the making of mandatory codes. Why not then let AWAC complete its draft code? Why not let the consultation on this code occur? Why rush to legislate on a number of issues that even AWAC thinks would better sit within a code of practice than in the statute book?

Of course Labor is committed to stamping out unscrupulous and surplus breeding and to a progressive agenda of reform for animal welfare. It is important, though, that measures are practical and balanced. Pet owners and buyers have an important part to play. Let us not unfairly target the regulated 14 per cent of pet shops. Let us not create more trade for those unscrupulous breeders that trade over the internet and over the border, outside the gaze of our licensing and compliance rangers, outside the gaze of our animal welfare inspectors.

Labor members will not be forced into supporting measures, one by one in the Assembly, when members have already committed to a process of comprehensive consultation. This has been slower than anticipated because of the need to get AWAC's input. This is a sensible step and will lead to strong and practical measures. It is always better to hasten slowly in order to consult thoroughly, to get it right, to get agreement amongst all stakeholders and to fully understand the impact of measures that could be introduced than to go ahead, with the negative impacts that this bill will undoubtedly have.

I ask Ms Le Couteur and her colleagues to act with wisdom today and not with haste and to agree to adjourn debate on this bill.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Molonglo) (11.43), in reply: Firstly, I seek leave to table some correspondence between myself and the Chief Minister on the subject of this bill.

Leave granted.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I table the following papers:

Animal Welfare Legislation Amendment Bill 2010—Exposure draft—Copies of correspondence between Ms Le Couteur and the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services—

Dated 11 March 2011.

Dated 24 March 2011.

Secondly, I would like to refocus the debate on what on earth we are actually debating. We are not here to debate whose idea it was first or whether this is a good process or not. What we are here to debate is something to improve the welfare of dogs, cats and other animals in the ACT. That is what the Greens are about. That is what I am about. That is what I would like to see the ACT Assembly be about.

I will read out some statistics. In 2009-10 the ACT RSPCA alone was presented with 1,670 dogs and puppies and 2,748 cats and kittens. This means, on average, the RSPCA is presented with over 12 cats or dogs every day of the year. And this is in addition to the hundreds of dogs processed by ACT Domestic Animal Services and the dogs which are rescued and rehomed by other volunteers in the ACT.

Each year, hundreds of these animals have to be euthanased. In 2009-10, for example, the RSPCA had to euthanase 1,183 cats and 98 dogs, and DAS euthanased over 100 of its saleable dogs and an unknown quantity of unsaleable dogs. In addition, we have no idea how many animals were euthanased by pet shops because under the current requirement pet shops do not have to disclose data about this.

That is what we are on about here. We are on about animal welfare and we are also on about the welfare of pigs. Mr Rattenbury mentioned that in his speech. For anyone who has not seen sow stalls, I was unfortunate enough to see a video on sow stalls and I have to say that it makes battery cage egg production by hens look enlightened. It is horrible. And that is a practice.

I must admit I am amazed that we could not find, as the lowest common denominator, among the Assembly that all three parties would be prepared to agree that this was something we did not want to ever see in the ACT. I point out that it is something that the Labor government in Tasmania have agreed they do not wish to see any more in Tasmania. I would like to see us be at least as enlightened as Tasmania.

Before going on, I would like to thank my fellow Greens for their support on this, and Greens staff members, as well as the members of the public and the RSPCA who are

here today showing their support for this animal welfare legislation. I have been overwhelmed by the amount of public support for this.

We have talked a bit about consultation. As has been mentioned, I have received over 50 submissions on this subject. My understanding is that the ACT government, in its waste strategy, received considerably less than that. I think it was actually less than 30 submissions. I would contend that, as far as consultation has gone, we have done a good job. We have had a lot of responses.

We put out this paper in December last year and since then there has been a lively public debate on the subject. The Chief Minister has entered into it through press releases only, which I do regret. But there has been a public debate on it and the vast majority of the public has been incredibly supportive of the legislation.

After the comments we did make quite a number of minor changes to the legislation. I wish to very much thank Mr Georgeson, who used to be in my office, for his huge amount of work on this bill. It is very much a credit to his actions.

I would like to thank Ms Porter for her contribution today because she was the only person here who actually ventured to talk about some of the substantive issues in the legislation. Unfortunately, maybe she did not have the time, due to her illness, to read it all. She said that my bill was only looking at pet stores. That is not true. The bill looks at pet stores but it looks at lots of other things as well.

Mr Stanhope's press release today basically demonstrates that the Labor Party, it would seem, has not even read the legislation. It says that the bill directly targets only Canberra's pet stores, which are responsible for 14 per cent of sales. It lists a number of other areas which should be targeted:

... backyard and occasional breeders, those who breed by accident or through negligence and animals sold through newspapers or fetes, farmer's markets or over the internet.

If either the Liberal or Labor Party read my legislation they would find that all of these are dealt with in the legislation. We do recognise that pet stores are not the only source of animals in the ACT. We have put a lot of work into trying to make legislation which covers the whole gamut of the pet industry, with the intention of improving the welfare of animals. That is the one intention behind this. This is not a political stunt.

This was part of my work program at the beginning of my time, in 2008, here in the Assembly. I postponed doing anything about this, as Ms Porter knows, because she had indicated her interest in this and I felt that that was reasonable. But we waited and waited, and we waited some more. We then felt that this was an important issue. As I mentioned, there are thousands of animals being abandoned and euthanased in the ACT each year. We want to do something about this real problem, so we have brought forward legislation.

I very much regret that it appears that it will not be supported today. We made the suggestion to the government, if they were not yet ready to support it in detail—they

have repeatedly said that there are aspects of it that they do support—that they demonstrate this by voting for it in principle and then adjourning the detail stage. We would have been very happy to see that as a way of letting everybody express their concern about the problems of animal welfare at present, while enabling the processes which Mr Stanhope has talked about. If he feels they need more time, that would have been a way to do it. However, that does not appear to be the case.

I wrote to Mr Stanhope about the legislation in March. He did reply in March. Unfortunately, his reply was to say that he would not engage constructively in the process. He said:

I deplore the lack of process followed by you, your politicisation of the issue and the lack of integrity shown by the ACT Greens.

My response is that I deplore the lack of interest by the Assembly in real animal welfare issues. The fact is that we need some action on this sooner rather than later. I am very disappointed that we cannot have even in-principle support for actions to improve the welfare of animals in the ACT. We cannot have in-principle support to ban sow stalls in the ACT, and we cannot even have in-principle support for more effective cruelty provisions.

Without passing this aspect of the bill, the ACT will continue to have the lowest cruelty fines in Australia, and these need modernising. Not only does my bill address this issue, but it actually makes amendments that clarify the language to remove impediments to prosecution. As the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee wrote to me, it is currently difficult for authorities to know when an abuse is a contravention of the act, except in some very extreme cases. My bill, if passed, would address that. So I really regret this.

There have been a few issues which have been dealt with. Mr Coe seemed to feel that my bill was in some way an attack upon responsible pet owners. It is not in any way an attack upon responsible pet owners. You can buy a pet from a pet store, own it, love it and live with it responsibly. We have never said anything that would suggest for one minute that that was not possible or even, in many cases, desirable. What we are saying is that there are other ways of doing it and it is important that we stop impulse sales.

Every time I walk past a pet store and I see the kittens and puppies, it tugs at my heartstrings. That is what it is there for—the cute little doggie in the window. I will not sing it to everyone. That is what they are there for—to tug at our heartstrings. What we want is responsible pet ownership so that people who acquire a pet do it with the full knowledge of what is going to happen and what their responsibilities are. I do not want pet owners to be like I was as a very young child. I had absolutely no idea, when this cat turned up, about what we were doing with it. People should not be repeating some of the things that have happened in the past.

As Ms Bresnan mentioned, PETstock, who do not sell pets in their stores, is one of the fastest growing franchises. We do not need to sell pets in stores. PETstock are not the only people who operate totally successful pet stores that I have visited and who do

not have dogs and cats in their windows. It is an outdated mode. We simply do not need it.

I am very disappointed that there has been such a clear gulf between the government's rhetoric on this subject and its actions. If it seriously cared about animal welfare, it would agree with this bill in principle. As Ms Bresnan and Mr Rattenbury have pointed out, unfortunately, what we are seeing here is the government refusing to engage with the Greens. The government is trying to believe that it is in the previous Assembly when there was majority government. Mr Stanhope, this is no longer a majority government. There are three parties in this Assembly. We all have a role to play in this Assembly.

One of the roles of the crossbench, of the Greens, is to introduce legislation, and hopefully to have that legislation passed—at the very least, to have that legislation considered by the other two parties in this Assembly. It takes all of us to make this Assembly work. Between the three parties, we represent, hopefully, the views of the citizens of the ACT. All of us have a right to be heard and a right to have our legislation considered.

Apart from the impact on animal welfare, that is the other very depressing point about this debate. It does not seem to be acknowledged by the government that we, the crossbench, do have a real legislative role in the Assembly. That is what we have been elected to be—legislators. My partner says to me in the morning, “Go off and pass some good legislation.” That is our job here. I would like to see us all take that seriously as part of our job.

I would like to quote from another very positive letter that I received in my consultation. Ms Bresnan has quoted from one person, and I will quote from another ACT resident:

As a retail business owner, I can well understand the need for any business in this hard economic market to want to sell as much and as often as is physically possible. This is where the problem lays with the sale of pets in shops. It is a clash of cultures. You want to buy your product for as little as possible and turn over your stock as fast as possible. To do this, you need to source puppies cheaply and to sell them to the first person who wants them. Otherwise, your costs eat into very important profit margins. To suggest that this is not the case is a fallacy. No retail enterprise sells something unless it is profitable. To do otherwise would be to go out of business. And that is the impasse. You cannot ethically sell an animal and make a profit at the same time. Something has to give, and it always is and always will be the health and welfare of the animals involved.

I remind you that this is a letter from a pet store owner who has been in the animal industry for a long time, and it succinctly covers some of the issues in the debate.

I commend this legislation to the Assembly. I fear that it will not be voted for, but I do commend it to the Assembly.

Question put:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Ayes 4

Noes 11

Ms Bresnan  
Ms Hunter  
Ms Le Couteur

Mr Rattenbury

Mr Barr  
Ms Burch  
Mr Coe  
Mr Corbell  
Mr Doszpot

Mr Hargreaves  
Ms Porter  
Mr Seselja  
Mr Smyth  
Mr Stanhope

Question so resolved in the negative.

## **Gungahlin Drive extension**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (12.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the ACT Government first committed to building the Gungahlin Drive Extension (GDE) at a cost of \$53 million in 2001;
- (b) that the total cost of the project is now estimated to be in excess of \$200 million;
- (c) that the GDE was initially intended to be completed by 2004;
- (d) that the current estimated timeframe for delivery is June 2012;
- (e) the litany of problems associated with the delivery of the GDE project, including the collapse of the Barton Highway bridge; and
- (f) that the residents of Belconnen and Gungahlin have been severely inconvenienced by the ongoing construction of the GDE; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) outline when each section of the GDE will be duplicated and open to the public;
- (b) publish the total cost of the project since 2001;
- (c) publish the additional cost of the project of building a single lane road, then duplicating it as opposed to building a two lane road in one construction project; and
- (d) report back to the Assembly on the above by 30 June 2011.

It is a travesty that 10 years on from when the road should have been commenced, and about seven years on from when the road should have been completed, we are here in this chamber lamenting the problems which have dogged so many Gungahlin residents over the last 10 years with regard to infrastructure and transport, due to the complete kerfuffle which is the Gungahlin Drive extension.

What this motion notes is that it was meant to cost \$53 million in 2001. It is probably going to cost in excess of \$200 million. It was meant to be done in 2004. It is now not going to be done until 2012. There have been a litany of problems associated with this road, and of course the people of Gungahlin have been severely inconvenienced because of this government's inability to manage the project properly.

The Gungahlin Drive extension is iconic of the Labor Party and iconic of this government. The icons include the delay in the commencement, the mismanagement of the contracts, the years of delay in construction, the tremendous cost blow-outs, the disregard for the tens of thousands of Gungahlin residents, the bridge collapse and the millions and millions of hours of lost productivity caused by the fact that so many people in Canberra are caught on that road morning after morning, afternoon after afternoon. It is a disgrace, that road, and it is such a shame that 10 years on from when that road was announced we are still here in this place lamenting the poor infrastructure for the people of Gungahlin.

Gungahlin did not spring up overnight. It is not like Gungahlin just happened. Gungahlin has been planned for decades. This road, in fact, has been planned for decades; yet this government is unable to deliver it in a decade. It is amazing, and it is a complete disregard of and a demonstration of the contempt they hold for the people of Gungahlin.

The GDE as an icon of this government, I think, is pretty well known. I think you just need to say "GDE" and people automatically associate that with this government. They associate it with the Chief Minister, they associate it with Mr Corbell, they associate it with Mr Hargreaves, they associate it with the cabinet.

This road is a travesty. I think even the government knows this. People tell me that they have gone and chatted with Labor MLAs as they have done the odd street stall, and secretly they agree. They whisper: "Look, I agree. It's been a bit of a kerfuffle. We'll fix it at some point."

I think the GDE is so toxic for this government, so incredibly toxic, that next year, in June, they are going to be out there, revealing this great new dual carriageway and they are going to rename it. I will say it now. It is going to be a very cynical exercise indeed. They know the term "GDE" is so toxic that they are going to want to erase any evidence of the term "GDE".

**Mr Hanson:** What are they going to call it?

**MR COE:** Who knows what they are going to call it. Maybe it will be the Jon Stanhope Parkway, maybe it will be the Rosemary Follett Parkway. Who knows? But

one way or another, I am very confident that the GDE, as we currently know it, is going to be erased from history and they are going to call it something else. I hope, by simply flagging this today, I will in fact deter the government from doing it. That would make it an even more cynical exercise now that I have actually mentioned it here in May, a year or so before it happened.

But watch this space. Are we going to see the Jon Stanhope Parkway? Or perhaps they will actually call it after a prominent Liberal, to try to make it hard for us to have a go at it. Who knows what they will do.

**Mr Hanson:** The Alistair Coe Parkway?

**MR COE:** If it is free flowing and concentrates on core business, I would be happy for it to have that name, as long as it is not a memorial parkway. But what I do think is important to note is that the GDE does describe in an infrastructure form what this government are all about, and I do believe that, in a very cynical exercise next year, they will rename it. So watch this space.

The story of the GDE really is quite amazing. It was originally costed by the Liberals at \$32 million.

**Mr Stanhope:** What a joke!

**MR COE:** Labor promised to build it for \$53 million. Was that a joke? He said \$32 million is a joke. But what about \$53 million? Is that a joke? \$53 million in 2001. That was what Mr Stanhope said: \$53 million. Here we are, 10 years on and it is going to cost around \$200 million. In 2001, when Jon Stanhope was elected, the Canberra Liberals were the only party contesting the 2001 election determined to construct the Gungahlin Drive extension as a priority. By contrast, Stanhope Labor went to the 2001 election with a policy to change the route of the road from the eastern flank of the AIS to the western side. Mr Stanhope knew full well that any change of route would require time-consuming, new environmental and planning approvals.

In actual fact there is an amendment being circulated stating that this is going to cost \$194 million. What a steal at \$194 million, when he said it was going to cost \$53 million! I tell you what, if I was to go and say I wanted to buy something for \$53 million and then they said it was going to cost \$194 million, I might be a little disappointed. But not this government; this government seem to think they have got a good deal. They have got a good buy. They seem to think that this is going to be one of these great infrastructure investments, one of the great capital spends that they regularly brag about. This government is absolutely unable to deliver capital works.

But it is important to note that the other party in this coalition, the Greens, of course did not want the road in the first place. In actual fact, Ms Le Couteur nods. They did not want the road in the first place, because Gungahlin residents must not deserve the road. It is worth noting that about a year ago, in March 2010, Ms Hunter said:

That is probably a straightforward one for the Greens. We do not believe that it was the right road to build in the first place ...

It was not the right road to build in the first place. So I wonder how the 45,000 people who live in Gungahlin are meant to get to work, how they are meant to get into this grandiose office project across the road that is going to cost \$430 million that the Greens have given a rubber stamp to. I wonder how they are going to travel, if they are not able to use the Gungahlin Drive extension, the road the Greens did not want to build. How can they spend any time out in Gungahlin? How can they pretend to represent the people of Gungahlin and also say they do not deserve the Gungahlin Drive extension? I think that too is indicative of this coalition and indicative, in particular, of what the Greens' stance is on families in our suburbs.

In estimates last year, it was revealed that the way the government had gone about doing their business by creating a single-lane road in each direction and then duplicating it was probably going to cost in the vicinity of \$20 million. It was a political decision, by cabinet, to build a single-lane road and then duplicate it. And that was a cynical exercise in itself.

Of course, it was the Liberals who had announced that we were going to go for a dual carriageway, and we took that to the 2008 election. And seeing the political opportunity, Jon Stanhope and the Labor Party jumped on the bandwagon and said: "We too will duplicate it. We'll make it two lanes in each direction." However, the director of Roads ACT confirmed in May 2009 in estimates that the road would probably be in the vicinity of 10 per cent more expensive, or \$20 million, because of the way they had chosen to construct it.

The opposition firmly believes that this cost blow-out was avoidable. If the road had been constructed properly the first time and constructed as a dual carriageway, we would not have that cost blow-out of \$20 million. There is a fair chance it would have cost, I think, in excess of \$100 million less—much less. And that is being very conservative. It could well be \$150 million less, if you go by the government's own valuation as at the time of the 2001 election of \$53 million.

Again, this is real money. Mr Stanhope is probably going to jump up here and say: "That's money we didn't have to spend back then. Therefore, we wouldn't have had other capital projects." The fact is that at the time of completion it is going to be in excess of \$20 million. That is the cost of the decision making Mr Stanhope has made. That is \$20 million of other infrastructure in Canberra that has been forgone because of the political decisions made by cabinet.

You only need to listen to talkback radio for an hour or two when they are talking about roadworks or pick up just about any copy of the *Canberra Times* to read references made to the Gungahlin Drive extension and to the problems that people are experiencing. Of course, there are issues with the actual road surface. When we had the heavy rain back in December and January, the road pretty much fell apart and many cars suffered quite serious damage. In actual fact, the government paid out a number of motorists because they did, in effect, say that they were contributing to the problems caused to their cars. They, of course, did not actually admit the liability but they did cough up 50 per cent to at least one person I know and perhaps to others as well.

Then, of course, in addition to the poor quality, to add to the woes of motorists, they then have to look at some pretty ordinary artwork on the side of the road as well. The steel one at the Barton Highway overpass—incidentally, the same Barton Highway overpass that collapsed—at \$250,000 really is quite amazing. When you look at what this government has done with regard to places like the Shepherd Centre and other very serious underfunding of core services, to then flippantly spend such huge amounts of money on things such as that Gungahlin Drive extension artwork really does sum up to a tee this government's poor priorities. It is something which I think is indicative in this 2011-12 budget and it has been indicative throughout this government's term of office since 2001.

Ken Keeling of Bruce wrote in the *Canberra Times* in October last year:

On Tuesday morning, as I drove northward towards Mitchell on the GDE, across the original Barton Highway bridge, I was struck by the incredibly powerful foresight of our Chief Minister.

Who else but our Great Leader could have envisaged, much less commissioned, a piece of Public Art (at untold expense to the ever-stretched ACT Public Purse) that so tellingly predicted the future—what I had previously seen only as a giant jumble of steel resembling a train wreck was in fact a prophet's vision for foretelling the future of phase 2 of the GDE bridge.

Awesome!

Awesome, Mr Keeling says. I think Mr Keeling has summed up the situation pretty well.

In this motion we would like to know exactly when each section of the GDE will be completed. So many people in Canberra are asking this question and we think it is fair that the government does give us a pretty precise date on when that will be—not just the official opening but when it will actually be open for cars to travel on it. We want to know what the total cost of the project will be since 2001. We would also like to get a formal recognition of what the additional cost of the project would be—building a single-lane road and then duplicating it, as opposed to building a two-lane road in the first place. Finally we ask that the Chief Minister report back to this place by 30 June.

This road is iconic of this government. It is a failure. It is a disaster. But we do hope it gets completed as quickly as possible for the people of Gungahlin.

**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) (12.16): I do welcome the opportunity to discuss the GDE, the Gungahlin Drive extension, the first major road constructed by any government since self-government. It is one of the major pieces of infrastructure delivered by an ACT government since self-government. Indeed, it is a road and a project the government is proud of.

We do accept, of course, that the road has had its moments. There has been the odd controversy or two that has beset the project. We acknowledge that. But at the end of the day it is a magnificent road. It is a magnificent piece of infrastructure. It serves now, and it will serve into the future, the people of the ACT extremely well.

There is something of an irony, though, about a Liberal member of this Assembly putting forward a motion on the GDE the day after budget day. Of course, this coincides with the events of exactly 11 years ago when Gary Humphries, I think as Treasurer, first tabled a budget bid or a budget intention in relation to the GDE and outlined the Liberal Party's proposals for the GDE.

I did interject, inappropriately of course, a minute ago that the Liberals intended that the GDE in its passage through Bruce Ridge be accompanied by a couple of tunnels. I do not know whether Mr Coe or any other members of the Liberal Party have actually costed tunnels. There were to be tunnels straight through Bruce Ridge. The GDE, as envisaged by the then Liberal Treasurer, replete with tunnels through Bruce Ridge, was to cost \$35 million. What a joke!

It was a cost or an estimate that the Liberal Party Treasurer at the time knew was nonsensical, knew was absurd. It actually, I think, is consistent with that other quite incredible omission that was contained within that last Liberal budget. It was a budget that was delivered by a party that knew it would not have to implement—

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MR STANHOPE:** That it would not have to implement the budget—

**Mr Smyth:** We had another one after that.

**MR STANHOPE:** No, no, you did not. No, you did not.

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**MR STANHOPE:** Of course, in that particular budget, in their last budget, the Liberal Party actually made absolutely no provision for wages. I think the most significant of the budget shocks we received on coming into government was that within the bottom line absolutely no provision was made for salaries. You can imagine that the most dodgy budgeting and dodgy budget lines related most particularly to nurses. There were negotiations proceeding at the time for a 14 per cent increase, and the negotiations were quite extended. I think the bid that was on the table that was being negotiated around was 14 per cent. When we came to look at the negotiating position that the then government adopted in relation to nurses, I think they were negotiating a pay rise probably over three years—

**Mr Smyth:** Relevance, Mr Speaker.

**MR STANHOPE:** No, it is in relation to budgeting, the claims made and the position put. There was no provision for these negotiated pay rises for nurses. We see in that context exactly how legitimate the Liberal Party's bid for a GDE with tunnels of \$32 million was. The Liberal Party proposed to build for \$32 million four lanes of the GDE from the Barton Highway to Belconnen Way with two tunnels and to complete it by 2004 for \$32 million. What a joke!

It is ironic that Mr Coe brings this matter forward for debate here on budget day. There were, of course, delays in the start. I think we are all aware of those. This government took a decision in relation to the route. We believe that it was reasonable for us as the legitimate, elected representatives of the people of the ACT to do that. Unfortunately, there was significant argy-bargy, most particularly with the commonwealth through the NCA. The commonwealth did intervene. The commonwealth would not support that particular route. That certainly delayed the start of the project considerably.

Once that issue had been resolved, legal action was commenced, as members of this place know. I am not quite sure what Mr Coe is suggesting. Perhaps he is suggesting that we just should have ignored the action, that we roll on, that we crash through, that we have no regard to the fact that legal action was commenced. I cannot remember the exact time frame now but I know it was lengthy and very wearing. That is some of the history. Of course, Mr Coe has glossed over that history in relation to issues that did beset this particular project from the outset.

Having said that, the first two lanes were delivered. The government undertook to duplicate those lanes. Of course, that is not unusual. I must say that I have reflected on this. I have not gone back to look at the history, but it would be interesting to know which roads were constructed during the Liberal period in government. I cannot remember any offhand. It would be interesting actually—I might do this, for the sake of the next debate on this issue—to look at—

**Mr Coe:** You said that last time, Jon.

**MR STANHOPE:** I actually was going to do it. I thought of it, but I never got around to doing it.

**Mr Coe:** You're not delivering, are you? You can't deliver, even to yourself, Jon. You can't even deliver to yourself.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, be quiet.

**MR STANHOPE:** Well, I did not think you would be so devoid of serious matters to debate that you would bring this up again. But I think it would be relevant in the context of the traditional methodology for delivering roads in the ACT to look at exactly how the Liberal Party proceeded in relation to the design and construction of roads. It would be interesting to look at the roads which it constructed and it would be interesting to identify those which have since been duplicated, most particularly by this government. I am aware of a number that have been.

There is a way in which roads and road infrastructure have traditionally been developed by the NCDC prior to self-government and by successive ACT governments. We see it on William Slim Drive; we see it on Ginninderra Drive; we see it all around Canberra. The roads delivered initially reflected the then demographic, the spread of the population. I must say that I cannot think of any roads in the ACT—

**Mr Coe:** They did the bridge work back then, though.

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Chief Minister, one moment, thank you.

**MR STANHOPE:** Well, the commonwealth did, yes. You didn't.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Stanhope! Stop the clocks. Mr Coe, your interjections are excessive. Please keep it down.

**MR STANHOPE:** Anyway, I will not dwell on the point further than that, other than to say that it would be interesting in the context of this debate to simply reflect on the traditional methodology—and we still employ it. We have done it at Horse Park Drive. We have done it across the town. We have done it with Gundaroo Drive—I think that that is probably a Liberal Party road—and with Horse Park Drive and Gundaroo Road. It is interesting that the final section of Ginninderra Drive adjacent to Charnwood has still not been duplicated. William Slim Drive has not been duplicated. There are roads throughout the entire territory built by governments other than this government that are single lane and are awaiting duplication as demand requires.

That is the traditional approach. It is the approach adopted by the commonwealth prior to self-government. It is the approach adopted by the Liberal Party in government and it is the approach adopted by this government in government. I think that if we do that little bit of research on roads that were constructed during the period of the Liberal government, we will see that it is the methodology that was pursued by them in government.

In relation to the questions that Mr Coe asked—they are quite reasonable questions—we did in July 2008 commit to the duplication of the GDE at a cost of \$85 million. We foreshadowed that it would be completed in June 2012. My latest advice from Roads ACT is that the road, the duplication, is likely to come in at \$78 million. At this stage, there is an expectation that it will come in at \$7 million under budget. At this stage, we are hopeful and expectant of the road being completed in December 2011.

I understand that the works at Glenloch Interchange, which are currently underway, will be completed by June, weather permitting. But the full duplication will be completed by December 2011, weather permitting. It will come in at \$7 million under budget.

There has been considerable work undertaken by Roads ACT in consultation with the ACT government architect Alastair Swain on some of the issues around aesthetics and material choice, particularly in relation to landscaping improvements along the

route. Those will be proceeded with. There has also been some resurfacing of existing sections of Gungahlin Drive to improve driver comfort et cetera and to deal with other issues in relation to surface.

Over this last year, as members know, we have had I think the wettest months for years. Indeed, over this last year 60 construction days were lost, which is quite significant in a reasonably short period of time. That, of course, did impact on the construction timetable. Nevertheless, at this stage it is six months ahead of schedule.

There have been issues. Indeed, Mr Coe went to the issue of the unfortunate collapse of the Barton Highway bridge. That is a matter that is being fully investigated. I am more than content with the attitude and responsiveness of Territory and Municipal Services and Roads ACT in relation to those issues, having regard to the contractual arrangements in place. Whilst that collapse was most unfortunate and regrettable, its rectification has come at no cost to the ACT government or to the people of the ACT.

Recently, the government sought to limit disruption to members of the public in relation to some of the resurfacing work that is being done. I am aware that there was an issue this morning as a result of a machinery failure by the contractor in relation to overnight work. Unfortunately, that machinery breakdown occurred at about 5 am and could not be cleared by the contractor in time not to cause some inconvenience to residents. Of course, with a major duplication project such as this, a significant piece of infrastructure, there will be inconvenience during the construction period. At the end of the day that is simply unavoidable, although we do our best to ensure that we minimise that disruption.

It is very simple to pick a number that is 10 years old and say, "This is what it should have been built for—\$35 million." It is such a simplistic notion in relation to escalations in costs. Members would be interested, in fact, to know that just over the space of this last 2½ years, the GDE second phase, which will come in at around \$80 million, is costed at \$21 million per kilometre of road constructed. I am sure that members would be interested to know that the recently costed Majura Parkway, which is funded to the tune of \$144 million, just three years later comes in at \$26 million per kilometre of road constructed.

That is the nature of the escalation as a result of changes. These are costs that are essentially unavoidable by any government. In the space of three years, the per kilometre cost increases by \$5 million a year. Of course, that takes into account the whole range of other cost adjustments that occur as a result of the changes happening incrementally all the time in relation to the value of the dollar, the value of the product and all costs associated with an economy.

I think the bottom line is that we proceeded with this project in precisely the same way that the Liberal Party prior to us proceeded with the construction of roads. The methodology is the same. It is the same methodology that was utilised by the commonwealth that we see across the entirety of the ACT.

I am grateful to Mr Coe for the opportunity to discuss this motion today and the issues. I have an amendment that I have circulated, and I formally move the amendment:

Omit all words after “That this Assembly”, substitute:

“notes:

- (1) that, in relation to the Gungahlin Drive Extension (GDE) Stage 2:
  - (a) it was scheduled to be completed by June 2012 at a cost of \$85 million; and
  - (b) construction is progressing well, is ahead of program, within budget, and is currently scheduled to be completed by the end of 2011;
- (2) that the following information about the completion of GDE Stage 2 is on the [www.gde.act.gov.au](http://www.gde.act.gov.au) website:
  - (a) the Belconnen Way section is now complete;
  - (b) the bridges over Ginninderra Drive, Belconnen Way and Ellenborough Street are now complete;
  - (c) the Glenloch Interchange is under construction with completion expected in June/July 2011; and
  - (d) the remainder of the road duplication between Aranda and the Barton Highway is under construction with completion expected late 2011. Landscaping upgrades will follow;
- (3) the total cost of the GDE, Stages 1 and 2 will be \$194 million; and
- (4) that this new road has been delivered similar to many other new roads to be built in the ACT under self-government, as a single carriageway to be duplicated later as funds permitted.”.

This actually reflects the truth of the matter rather than the fiction that is contained in Mr Coe’s motion. I commend my proposed amendment to the Assembly.

In relation to the work of art, the work that Mr Coe was incredibly critical of, I just make this point. The artist is one of Australia’s leading and most esteemed sculptors, Richard Goodwin, whose most recent commission was a work of art at the War Memorial for our national servicemen. It is the same artist. I doubt, Mr Coe, that you would scorn that work in the same way that you have scorned his other work. (*Time expired.*)

*Debate interrupted in accordance with standing order 74 and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour.*

**Sitting suspended from 12.32 to 2 pm.**

## **Questions without notice**

### **Chief Minister—comments**

**MR SESELJA:** My question is to the Chief Minister. This morning, when answering a question about a young girl having a bad experience in the hospital and how this related to government spending priorities, you responded by saying that these questions were “tiresome and tawdry”. Chief Minister, will you apologise for this rude and insensitive comment to a Canberra family whose only crime was to disagree with you?

**MR STANHOPE:** My comment was not directed at the person that asked the question. My comment was directed, as everybody in attendance this morning knows very well, at the continuing tiresome debate in relation to the value of public art.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Seselja, a supplementary?

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, you have previously labelled those in the community who disagree with you on public art as “rednecks and philistines”. Do you stand by these comments?

**MR STANHOPE:** I stand by the comments I made, but that is not what I said.

**MR HARGREAVES:** A supplementary?

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Hargreaves.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Chief Minister, is it true that in fact public art is what we leave behind to express what is essentially the city? Is it true, therefore, that the measure of our society is measured by what we leave behind?

**MR STANHOPE:** Thank you, Mr Hargreaves. I do thank you for your question. I think it is important that at some stage the Liberal Party show preparedness to engage in a mature way in the debate about the arts and creativity in the creative sector. It is a pity, I have to say, that the debate has endured for a number of years now in relation to this government’s attempts to support the arts and artists. They have been, in a number of ways, most particularly in relation to public art and sculpture.

We support the arts, of course, in a variety of ways but one of the ways that we support the arts is through sculpture. That the Liberal Party have refused to engage in any attempt at conversation in relation to the intrinsic value of public art, sculpture or the arts is a matter of enormous regret, I think, for the broader community, as is the fact that the Liberal Party is so scornful of the arts and artists.

**MR SMYTH:** A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, if your comment was directed at all those who have objected or taken a point of difference with you on public art,

and you have now described them as “tiresome and tawdry”, will you apologise to all those who have a different opinion from you?

**MR STANHOPE:** Everybody who was in attendance at the meeting this morning, and everybody who listened to my comments, knows that the Liberal Party is not reporting or referring to them correctly. In fact, their attempt at misrepresenting what I said really does them no credit. What I said, and everybody in attendance knows what I said, was that the continuing tiresome debate about the value or non-value of art or public art was tiresome.

The question in relation to concerns about waiting times at accident and emergency was answered in full by the Minister for Health, the Deputy Chief Minister. The question in relation to health was answered by the Minister for Health. The question in relation to art was answered by me. My comments had absolutely nothing to do with Canberra Hospital or treatment at Canberra Hospital. My comment was directed, entirely and solely, essentially at the Liberal Party’s incapacity to engage, in a mature way, in a community conversation about the intrinsic value of art and of creativity. Really, it is a reflection of the Liberal Party, and I think it is a reflection or perhaps a moot example of why the Liberal Party occupy the opposition bench and why the people of Canberra have now, for more than a decade, rejected them as a potential alternative government, because they stand for nothing. They stand for absolutely nothing. *(Time expired.)*

### **Transport—services**

**MS HUNTER:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and concerns transport options in new parts of Canberra. Minister, last sitting you were asked about the provision of public transport in new suburbs and you told the Assembly that “the government is seeking to ensure equitable access to public transport by all Canberrans”. Minister, how is it equitable if people in new suburbs simply do not have access to public transport?

**MR STANHOPE:** I thank Ms Hunter for the question. In relation to a government’s determination to provide services there are, of course, always issues and it is very difficult in terms of the resources available and the issues around the number of people that might access that particular resource at a particular time. Ms Hunter, I am sure you are aware of the equation—I know you are—that when the government, through TAMS, or through ACTION, provides a service into a newly established suburb where perhaps in the initial stage of the creation of that particular community in a new suburb the population is low and usage is low to non-existent, the cost to ACTION and to the network in providing a service into a new, emerging suburb at the outset—which would be highly desirable, of course, in relation to the capacity to create behaviours—is simply not cost-effective. Where resources are limited, governments, organisations and agencies take decisions around the best and most effective use of what is always a limited resource.

Ms Hunter, as I am sure you are aware, as suburbs begin to grow, as the population density increases, as more people are inclined to utilise public transport, the government does seek to then provide enhanced services and, indeed, in the budget

that the Treasurer delivered yesterday you would be aware that the government proposes to fund ACTION services into four suburbs—I think most particularly Casey, Crace and Bonner; I am not sure of the fourth—to deal with precisely this issue.

As the population grows, as demand develops, the government seeks to respond, but it is, as always, a question of available resources and decisions we take to prioritise the way in which those resources are applied.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Ms Hunter?

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, will the new suburbs in Molonglo have access to public transport services from the time they are ready to be occupied, and if not should they continue to be marketed as sustainable “envirodevelopments”?

**MR STANHOPE:** It would not be the government’s intention to provide a bus service into Molonglo on the day that the first house is occupied, Ms Hunter, if that is the import of your question, which I believe it to be. I do not believe it is reasonable, where resources are always limited, are always stretched, where they must be applied in a way as equitably as we can and where the pie is defined, for us to remove the services from, say, existing work in order to provide a service into the first Molonglo suburb the minute the first house is occupied. I do not believe it would be fair or reasonable. It would not be our intention to run a bus service through Molonglo the minute the first house is occupied. I do not believe that is reasonable and I believe even the residents of Molonglo would understand why the government would be constrained in funding a route in those circumstances. But in the context of a debate around sustainability, yes, it is our intention, of course within parameters, depending on your definition, for those suburbs to be sustainable. How long is a piece of string?

**MS BRESNAN:** A supplementary.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Has the government done any modelling of the cost savings generated by providing public transport and public transport infrastructure to new suburbs from the outset, both for the government and for householders?

**MR STANHOPE:** I am not aware of the exact detail of the work that would have been done in relation to cost and benefits, but I am more than happy to take the question on notice.

**MR COE:** A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, what suburbs are likely to get those buses first—the suburb of Casey, which is still waiting, or suburbs in Molonglo?

**MR STANHOPE:** The budget yesterday provided additional funding for additional ACTION services and routes in suburbs. Routes that were defined for funding in yesterday's budget include routes into Casey.

### **Budget—revenue**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Treasurer. On 5 May 2009 you claimed that the ACT's budget deficits in coming years were caused by "a range of external factors beyond our control", most notably the global financial crisis. In the 2008-09 budget, you forecast revenue for the coming financial year, the 2011-12 financial year, as \$3.738 billion. In your 2011-12 budget, you anticipate that revenue will now be \$3.982 billion. Treasurer, given that revenue for the coming year will be nearly \$250 million more than the government predicted back in 2008, why do you continue to claim that the global financial crisis caused your budget problems for 2011-12?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I think Mr Smyth understands, or I hope he does, that the global financial crisis, the ongoing impact of it, is being felt across financial years; it has been felt across the last two. Yes, the performance of our own economy has assisted us to recover, and to recover in time, which is exactly why we will see a \$100 million turnaround—

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth!

**MS GALLAGHER:** in our bottom line after we have agreed to further spending and to continued loss of GST revenue. The budget outlines losses in GST revenue, continued losses—

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, you asked your question.

**MS GALLAGHER:** which are linked to the global financial crisis of in the order of \$216 million. We forecast a budget deficit for this financial year, as of last year, in the order of \$130 million. We are now revising that budget deficit up, showing the improvement in the turnaround, basically due to our own-source revenues of \$100 million, and our budget continues to grow. That is the answer, Mr Speaker. What the opposition will have you believe is that we are getting all this additional revenue and it is going nowhere. It is going into new services. The budget continues to grow. That is the plan that we started in 2008, when we said we would have a longer term recovery strategy for our budget, that we were not going to slash and burn, that we were going to be measured in our return to surplus.

Our recovery has occurred faster than we had thought, which is why we are returning to surplus two years ahead of time. Our own performance and additional revenue are assisting us to improve our bottom lines, as are the savings that we have outlined in the budget. All of those together give us a good way through and a return to surplus in

2013-14. But I will not accept those views that have been put opposite that the global financial crisis never happened, that we never saw the impact on our bottom line. We still are not getting the levels of GST—

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth!

**MS GALLAGHER:** that we forecast in 2008-09 for this year; they will now be delivered in 2014-15. So, yes, our own-source revenue has assisted in our recovery. That is why we are returning to surplus faster. That is why our bottom line looks healthier. That is why we are able to do targeted new spending in this budget.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, before you ask your supplementary I remind you that having asked the question it is not an invitation to continue to hector the answerer across the chamber.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you for that, Mr Speaker. Just on what you have said, parliamentary convention for hundreds of years in the Westminster system has not seen members sit mute in their chairs. Chambers are lively places—

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, the question.

**MR SMYTH:** I accept what you say but there is no parliament in the world—

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Smyth, the question.

**MR SMYTH:** Treasurer, why won't you simply be honest with the ACT community and admit that the real cause of your problems is the fact that ACT government expenditure has increased by nearly \$270 million between 2008 and 2011?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I do not think the government have ever hidden from the fact that our government services have grown and, by growing, they require additional expenditure.

*Mr Seselja interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** Mr Seselja, I will be very interested tomorrow to listen to just what part of the \$270 million in additional expenditure, if that figure is indeed correct, which we will check because I do not trust Mr Smyth necessarily—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** I trust him most of the time but I will just have a look at that figure. But which of the \$270 million do the Liberal Party obviously not agree with? What is it that they would not have funded?

I go back through the last three budgets that I have been responsible for. Go and find those services, go and find the investments—in health, in education, in community services, in justice, in the environment, in supporting infrastructure development.

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** Just which one of those wouldn't you do? That is the challenge.

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** Yes, Mr Smyth, we could have returned to surplus faster had we not spent an extra cent on government services. Is that realistic? Is that practical? No, it is not, and you know it. And now, if you are going to criticise—

*Mr Smyth interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** If you are going to criticise the spend, identify the things that you would not do and be honest about that.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Mr Seselja.

**MR SESELJA:** Treasurer, were you not being dishonest with the community when you said on Triple 6 yesterday that the ACT had taken a one billion dollar hit when the truth is that revenue has exceeded your expectations by \$1.22 billion over that period?

**MS GALLAGHER:** No, I was not being dishonest, Mr Speaker.

**MRS DUNNE:** A supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** Treasurer, why have you failed to take control of ACT government expenditures? Is that not part of your job as Treasurer?

**MS GALLAGHER:** Yes, it is part of my job. I think, if Mrs Dunne had time to go and read the budget papers, particularly budget paper 3, which clearly outlines the budget plan, she would see the effort that has gone in through savings measures, through the expenditure review and evaluation committee, to actually keep a very close eye on government expenditure, to be constantly looking for savings.

Being a reasonable government, we also accept that government services are going to continue to grow. The health budget will grow. The education budget will grow. The emergency services budget will grow. Community services will grow. All of those areas will grow. Municipal services will grow. Whilst we are trying to recover our budget and recover it in a timely fashion, we are also expanding government services at the same time. That is what a responsible government does. That is what a responsible treasurer does—manage the budget, manage expenditure and, in this instance, in this year, outline a plan which returns the budget to surplus.

Overall, the responses that I have had on the budget from people who watch budgets—from the breakfast I attended and from the dinner I attended last night, the

chamber event—all believe that this is a reasonable and responsible budget. I will take their advice before I take the advice of an untested opposition.

### **Planning—guidelines**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and concerns the new energy efficiency licensing and regulatory system. Last year new government legislation was introduced to establish a system for licensing and setting new procedures for energy efficiency ratings auditors. This legislation commenced on 1 March this year. Minister, can you update us on the progress of the implementation of the new legislation and systems?

**MR BARR:** Off the top of my head right now, no, Mr Speaker, but I can provide information on the detailed implementation of the initiative for the member.

**MR SPEAKER:** Ms Le Couteur, a supplementary question?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you. I am afraid I actually did not hear any of that, but anyway. When will the code of practice which is required for the system to function fully be finalised and notified on the legislation register?

**MR BARR:** Again, I will take some advice on that. It is a fairly technical question. One would presume that you would not be carrying around the level of detail around when instruments would be notified.

*Members interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! I cannot hear Mr Barr.

**MR BARR:** There are thousands of instruments placed on that register. On the exact date of the placement of this one, I will seek advice and provide that information to the member.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Ms Hunter?

**MS HUNTER:** Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, when will these systems be finalised, as it seems that many of the energy efficiency assessors are still waiting for these new procedures and fee structures to be properly instated?

**MR BARR:** We certainly are focused on this area and, of course, given the additional resources that have been provided for the Planning and Land Authority in relation to this initiative, to the implementation of new nationwide initiatives under the Building Code of Australia and particularly the move to new generation software and assessment tools in relation to this issue.

I am aware of particular media reports, most notably, I think, on the now 7.30 program on the ABC, in relation to there being concerns across the country about the different software systems that are used to determine an energy rating for houses. There is a need for greater consistency and a move to a new generation of software is

important. It is part of an ongoing national program. In relation to the detail of that, if the Greens are interested in a more specific briefing on that, I am happy to provide it. But it is not the sort of thing that I carry around in my head for question time.

**MS BRESNAN:** A supplementary?

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Bresnan.

**MS BRESNAN:** Minister, what should assessors whose licences are expiring do until the code of practice is finalised, and when finalised will the assessors be liable for those fees from 1 March, 1 May or some time later, and how should they set their fees for clients in the meantime?

**MR BARR:** There are transition arrangements. The ACT Planning and Land Authority is working closely with the industry. I understand that if I had time to get the web page up there is an information page in relation to this on the Planning and Land Authority's website and I would refer the member there for some further information in relation to this matter.

### **Government buildings—vacancy rates**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, I refer to your plans for a half-billion-dollar office building here in the city. What is the current vacancy rate of A, B, C and D-class office buildings in the territory?

**MR STANHOPE:** Thank you, Mr Coe, for the question. I do not have those numbers in my head, although I did see them as recently as last week. But I must say that I did not commit them to memory. Certainly, there has in recent years, over the last couple of years most particularly, been a significant increase in vacant, most particularly C and D-grade and some B-grade, buildings. I am not aware if there is any vacant A-grade space. There must be a tiny bit within the city, but there is not much out in the town centres.

Averaged out, there is somewhere in the order of 15 per cent vacant space, driven very much by a major rebuilding program that the commonwealth has initiated in relation to building and accommodation standards which the commonwealth now insists on for its public servants, for its employees. There is a very interesting distinction now being drawn by some within the property sector, and indeed by the Liberal Party in this place. The property sector, of course, have over recent years applauded the commonwealth's move to insist on five-star A-grade accommodation for commonwealth public servants. We have a situation now—

**Mr Hanson:** Do they buy it or do they lease it?

**MR STANHOPE:** They pay for it. We have a situation now where the vast majority of commonwealth public servants engaged within the ACT are accommodated in high environmentally sustainable A-grade accommodation—indeed, I think in excess of 90 per cent are in accommodation of that description or are to enter accommodation of that description.

It is interesting that the position for ACT public servants is almost the mirror image of that. The majority of ACT public servants are in B grade or C grade, and indeed some in D grade, accommodation. This government, for a variety of reasons, including what we see as a commitment to our public service to be accommodated appropriately, have been investigating for a number of years the construction of an ACT government office. We have a number of buildings now which we own. Indeed, I refer most particularly to Callam offices, Macarthur offices and Dame Pattie, each of them ageing, each of them in need of a significant retrofit to bring them up to appropriate green-star NABERS ratings. Indeed, the Callam offices, I think on last advice, require somewhere in the order of \$56 million worth of repairs and retrofit.

Indeed, through the work that we have done, we have also looked at how best to co-locate most particularly administrative staff to get efficiencies to better drive the performance of the ACT public service. We have looked at the extent or the capacity, through the cost-benefit analyses we pursued, at the savings to the bottom line, to the budget, to the people of the ACT, were we to relocate the majority of our administrative staff into a centralised office. And the savings are significant. I think the issue that the Liberal Party has not yet grasped is that the advice to the government through this process is that we would achieve savings, operational savings, of in the order of \$19 million a year, ongoing. \$19 million a year would be the savings in rent, electricity, utilities et cetera. So certainly we invest, but we invest to save, and in doing so achieve a whole range of other benefits. (*Time expired.*)

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, a supplementary?

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, aside from the half a billion dollar office building, you are also moving 500 public servants to Gungahlin. Which departments and offices will be moving to Gungahlin?

**MR STANHOPE:** I thank Mr Coe for the question. I am sure Mr Coe applauds the decision that the ACT government have taken to ensure a major office development within the Gungahlin town centre. We are very pleased to have been able to make that decision. At this stage, the government anticipate that we will go to the market sometime this year.

The final details in relation to all aspects of the proposal have not yet been made but I am sure that members and certainly residents of Gungahlin are interested in this most significant decision that the government have taken. We will devise a process. We will call for expressions of interest. We will begin the process of ensuring that there is appropriate, A-grade, environmentally sustainable accommodation for upwards of 500 ACT public servants.

The number is not yet finally identified but certainly they will be public servants pursuing duties that are within the cohort that we have identified as most appropriately located within the ACT. But, in relation to the identity of the full cohort of public servants, we have not decided on the final make-up of the full cohort.

**MR SMYTH:** A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, do you agree that announcing a move of more than 500 public servants to Gungahlin and advocating at the same time for a \$340 million office block to accommodate ACT public servants in one location is a direct contradiction?

**MR STANHOPE:** No, I do not. We employ as full-time public servants in excess of 17,000 people. The question that the member proposes really would beg: why aren't we co-locating all 17,000 in an office block? We are not because many of them perform services that, for instance, are not administrative.

**Mr Hanson:** So they are all going to be nurses going to Gungahlin, are they, or doctors or—

**MR STANHOPE:** That is basically what Mr Smyth is suggesting and I must say it is what Mr Seselja, in his ignorance this morning, suggested—that we needed to ensure that front-line service delivery was not impacted by moving public servants into an office block in the city; Mr Seselja, of course, for the time being forgetting that the majority of our public servants are doctors and nurses and teachers and police officers and firefighters and ambulance officers who of course will remain precisely where they currently are.

Let us bring just a little bit of common sense and a little bit of intelligence to the debate. We are proposing that our essential administrative staff, our policy makers, our administrators, will be co-located. It will create very significant efficiencies and synergies in relation to the capacity of our public service to work as a single public service. Over and above that, the capital investment will of course be an asset, will not affect our bottom line and will produce very significant savings, savings in the order of \$20 million a year in direct costs, let alone the indirect economic costs or benefits that come from co-locating a workforce. So this is a project that I do hope that the Liberal Party at some stage takes the trouble to engage with, does acknowledge the \$20 million in direct savings that would result from this particular proposal, and that we have to house our staff, our public servants, somewhere. (*Time expired.*)

**MR SMYTH:** A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, you said this morning at the Canberra Business Council budget breakfast that these would be front-line staff. Now that you have told the Assembly it will be upwards of 500, can you detail what front-line services will constitute the upwards of 500 public servants moving to Gungahlin?

**MR STANHOPE:** I must say I have some difficulty answering the question. I am not quite sure what comment of mine this morning Mr Smyth alleges I made and the context in which I made it. So I really cannot answer the question. I really have absolutely no faith in anything that Mr Smyth, or indeed any member of the Liberal

Party, says I said and I would not believe it, of course, in a fit. I am absolutely certain that at no stage did I say we were moving front-line services to Gungahlin. I do recall Mr Seselja in great bemusement expressing concern that we move our front-line services into a government office within Gungahlin.

**Mr Hanson:** You're a dud, Jon.

**MR STANHOPE:** What I said—

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Chief Minister, one moment, thank you. Stop the clocks. Mr Hanson, I would invite you to withdraw the unparliamentarily language.

**Mr Hanson:** I withdraw the comment made about Mr Stanhope that he is a dud. I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Thank you. Chief Minister.

**MR STANHOPE:** No, it has never been the government's intention—and it turns again on your definitions. All of our public servants are vital to the performance of the ACT public service. Everybody has a very significant and important role to play and they are equally important. But in the context of front-line service delivery, which requires, for instance, face-to-face contact with a client group, it would not, of course, be our intention that those located in Gungahlin would be taken from a location where they deal directly in the delivery of what we know broadly as front-line, direct service delivery—of course not. I never said that and I never suggested that that was our intention. In fact, what I have said is that they will be public servants who will be identified as not being necessarily advantaged—or the service being advantaged generally—by their co-location in a government office block in Civic.

### **Budget—assessment**

**MR HARGREAVES:** My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the 2011-12 ACT budget has been described as modest, measured, targeted, fair, fiscally responsible and disciplined. Some have even described it as a beige budget. Treasurer, what is your response to this assessment of the budget?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Mr Hargreaves for the question. Overall, the government is very pleased with the responses that we have received so far to the ACT budget for this financial year. Many of the commentators are calling it a measured and sensible budget, a responsible budget. They are all descriptions that we on this side would tend to agree with. We have had a very difficult budget cabinet process as we have weighed up the expenditure requirements that our community are expecting with the ability to recover our budget.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MS GALLAGHER:** I hear those opposite continuing to interject. It appears that if I am on my feet then that is the green light for all six of them to start chirping. The increase in revenue that we are expecting this year is in the order of, I think, \$192 million, as Mr Smyth pointed out. If you look in the future years, from that there

is very distinct moderation in that revenue growth. Indeed, the large revenue growth in this budget is around our accelerated land supply target, the tax dividend from land.

What are the opposition suggesting—that we should not put out land to the market to deal with the demand that we are seeing in the community?

**Mr Smyth:** You are struggling, aren't you?

**MS GALLAGHER:** No. It is an obvious response to the criticism that the opposition have. They criticise more revenue in the budget. They criticise the expenditure. They criticise the bottom line. But what you see is, with the additional revenue of \$192 million, expenditure increases only by \$75 million. We improve our bottom line by \$100 million and we return to surplus on time and we do so in a way that manages the costs to individual households.

Through this budget we are providing more affordable housing options. We are providing more social housing. We are providing very significant increases for people with a disability, whether it be in schools or in the community. The concessions initiative alone would be the single biggest concessions increase since self-government. We are providing more out-of-home care, youth justice and care and protection services. We are improving energy and water efficiency for low income and disadvantaged households.

We are also able to deliver more acute health services, more surgery, more cancer services, more mental health services, more ambulance staff and more ambulances around the town, more investment in municipal services and additional expenditure in a very significant infrastructure spend. This is what we are able to achieve with a very modest spend in this budget, a modest, targeted, responsible spend.

I think those who have commented on it, who have called it responsible, fair and disciplined, are correct. That is exactly what this budget is. It is a budget delivered by a government that are focused on delivering services to the community at a time when we manage and improve our efficiency in our own time and that we return the budget to surplus in 2013-14.

There are, of course, critics of the budget. As I have said a number of times, the budget will not be everything to everybody. But I think overall the people who understand budgets, who understand the different and competing pressures that the government faced, believe that this budget was the right one for the times that we are facing at this point.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Mr Hargreaves?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Not wanting to pre-empt any supplementary Ms Porter might want to ask, my supplementary to the Treasurer is: what other responses has the community made in relation to the budget?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I have had the opportunity in the last 24 hours to attend a number of functions around the town, talking with the community around the budget,

what is in it, what is not in it, what they like and what they do not like. I have just come from—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, thank you.

*Mr Hargreaves interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hargreaves!

**MS GALLAGHER:** the community sector briefing where I think there were people that were very welcoming of a number of initiatives. Obviously, they would have liked to have seen more. The Canberra Business Council put out a media release welcoming a number of initiatives, particularly in tourism, in the Asian Cup, in the decision that we have made to find the efficiencies within ourselves. The P&C have put out a relatively positive budget release—a little uncertain about how some of the initiatives are going to be implemented in schools, but overall they were very pleased, and indeed very pleased with the additional money for students with disabilities. Chris Peters, from the chamber of commerce, gave it an eight out of 10 this morning on 2CC and said it ticked all the boxes.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson!

**MS GALLAGHER:** Whilst I think the *Canberra Times* gave me a pass, not a distinction, I think that, having regard to the eight out of 10 from Chris Peters and the chamber, from my old university days it might get to a distinction level.

*Mr Hargreaves interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hargreaves!

**MS GALLAGHER:** The editorial comments in the *Canberra Times* I think were fair.

**Mr Hanson:** ACTCOSS gave you a six, Katy.

**MS GALLAGHER:** As I said, it is not everything to everybody. I have just been to the ACTCOSS function and they have been very positive about it.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Treasurer, one moment, thank you. Stop the clocks. Mr Hanson, you are now warned for repeated interjecting. I have used your name a number of times in this question time to ask you to not interject so much.

**MS GALLAGHER:** The NRMA have put out a positive media release, as have the Master Builders. There have been some very welcome comments from the Gungahlin

Community Council around the spend on infrastructure. So I think overall the message that we are getting back from the Canberra community is that within a pretty tight financial environment, within an environment where we are making attempts to return to surplus post the global financial crisis, we have been able to tick a number of boxes for a number of organisations. Yes, not everything to everybody, but I think overall the budget is always a balancing act. We on this side believe that, with some very good new programs and new infrastructure coming on board, we have got that balance right.

**MS PORTER:** Supplementary?

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Treasurer, what is your response to the claims made by the Property Council, other industry players and those opposite regarding the lease variation charge remissions as obtained in the budget?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I thank Ms Porter for the question. There has been a lot of comment and criticism around the changes to the lease variation charge in this budget and around the potential impacts that will have on housing affordability in the city. The government have considered this issue very carefully. We have spent over two years of work both in government with external experts supporting that work and with the property industry themselves talking with them around the move to codification of the old change of use charge.

Industry are seeking the certainty that codification offers and indeed some of the efficiencies that codification offers. The criticism I think comes from the amount of money that is contained in the schedules and how much of that should be borne by the property industry themselves. So in this budget we offer the property industry a 75 per cent remission on those charges, so, for example, on a unit that may have a \$50,000 attached value that would be in the order of a \$15,000 charge.

I hear what the Property Council are saying; we hear their concern. However, we believe this is another attempt to get the balance right, that we provide some transitional support as we move to full codification and a 25 per cent remission over a number of years to deal with the concerns the Property Council have made, but we believe this is the right thing to do for the community. What it will allow is a fair return—a fair return in the order of only \$20-odd million a year. When you look at that against some of our other revenue lines, we can see what a very small part this is—less than one per cent of our own-source revenue from a lease variation charge—but what that income allows is for us to invest in projects like the ones that Ms Burch is doing. (*Time expired.*)

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Mr Seselja?

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Treasurer, how much will the new lease variation charge contribute to rents in the ACT once fully implemented?

**MS GALLAGHER:** I think it is almost impossible to answer that question. As Mr Seselja would know, and as he would know from reading the two expert reports—

the Nicholls report and the Piggott report—both of those experts point to and describe in detail a range of factors which influence house prices. Is Mr Seselja suggesting—and I sense this is where he is going—that if there were no lease variation charge or the flat fee that was in operation for a number of years at a very low rate—if we went back to those days—we would see house prices drop by \$50,000 and we would see rents drop by any significant amount?

We do not believe that the lease variation charge, particularly with the very generous concessions provided by this government, will impact on the price of housing. There are many variables which influence the price of housing. Is Mr Seselja seriously arguing that a charge that brings to the ACT community a sum in the order of \$20 million a year is going to have a catastrophic effect on rental prices? Is Mr Seselja saying that we should not allow a fair return of that added value of the land that has been granted to a private developer being returned to the community? Is that what Mr Seselja is seriously arguing?

We believe \$20 million a year for the granting of those extra development rights right across the city is a fair return for the ACT community, and that \$20 million can be used to enhance social housing, public housing, to invest in new services and to support low income households. That is the job of government.

### **Housing—affordability**

**MS BRESNAN:** My question is to the Chief Minister and concerns affordable housing. Last year the government advised that it was reviewing its affordable housing action plan. Given that the first version of the action plan, released in 2007, did not seem to use data or evidence to ensure that the strategies would deliver housing that was affordable to those that needed it, what steps are you taking to guarantee that this upcoming version is evidence based?

**MR STANHOPE:** Ms Bresnan, I am not quite sure what I could point to in relation to evidence or what you would regard as evidence, but the department, the government, have consulted extensively through well-attended roundtables with representatives of all of the constituent organisations with an interest in issues around housing and housing affordability. We have consulted extensively. We have taken submissions. We have dealt with the community sector, with the construction industry, and have researched what we would regard as best practice, as practice within other jurisdictions. We have researched extensively issues around housing affordability, access to housing, barriers to access. We have looked at what we see as models within other jurisdictions that we regard as best practice. And we have sought to apply those learnings to our own experience.

In the context of what concrete evidence we have, I would have to take some advice on that. I am more than happy to do it. But it is an issue that we have taken enormously seriously in the ACT in recent years. With respect to any suggestions or allegations that our previous policy was not based on evidence, I must say I would dispute that, in the context of what we regard as evidence.

We have acknowledged that there are still areas where we need to do better. We do have a concern around our capacity to assure affordable housing, most particularly for

older Canberrans. There is a genuine issue in relation to issues around older women and their capacity to access or to maintain affordable and appropriate housing. We are still working with stakeholders in relation to each of those areas.

Ms Bresnan, I will take some advice from the department to see what other information or advice I can provide to you, but we have taken enormous trouble to seek to understand how we as a government can respond, how we can intervene, what levers we have, where we can invest. I think we have an outstanding record of achievement in relation to a government response or intervention in relation to issues around housing affordability.

As I said previously, any discussion around housing affordability in the ACT needs to start with the acceptance of the fact that as a jurisdiction with over 11½ thousand, closing on 12,000, I believe, units of public housing, representing just on 8½ per cent of all housing in the ACT, we provide twice as much, for instance, on a pro rata basis, public housing, as a government, than the governments of New South Wales or Victoria. Any conversation around this government's commitment to housing affordability or appropriate housing for those that do struggle to access appropriate housing needs to come from a base, or at least an acceptance, of the enormous investment by ACT governments in public housing. I do not have the final number but I believe it is now approaching 12,000 units of public housing in the ACT—over, I believe, 8½ per cent of all housing.

I believe New South Wales has around four per cent of its housing stock in public hands, and I believe Victoria has less than four per cent of its housing in public hands. (*Time expired.*)

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Ms Bresnan?

**MS BRESNAN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, how can a household on a single income expect to enter the housing market given they need to be earning about \$120,000 a year to qualify for the government's affordable housing packages?

**MR STANHOPE:** I will take advice on that because, as I say, it really does not go to the very point I was just making, that we have somewhere in the order of 12,000 units of public housing.

In the context of government's capacity to invest, you must start from a position that actually looks at all of the investment which a government makes in relation to the issue of housing, and in this jurisdiction, in this territory, successive governments have invested in public housing to a level that no other government, I think perhaps apart from the Northern Territory where the investment is made by the commonwealth, has invested in public housing in the way that we currently do. That is a starting point, and we have of course in place a range of other initiatives.

I do not deny for one minute, Ms Bresnan, that there is enormous stress within that cohort of residents who are not eligible for public housing to access. I accept that and the government is responding strongly to the needs of that cohort who are not or do not meet the threshold or the cut-off for public housing. It is the most challenging

issue, and we have responded strongly through a raft of programs, most particularly our requirement that 20 per cent of new developments be affordable, through CHC Affordable Housing, which is on the way to delivering 1,000 units of housing at affordable rates, through land rent where we are now approaching our 1,000th land rent block, and through a range of other supports, including community housing and social housing providers.

It is an area where we have invested enormous effort and energy and where we believe we are doing better than any other government in Australia.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Chief Minister, is the data the government is collecting showing that private renters who just miss out on public housing are likely to be the households in most housing stress?

**MR STANHOPE:** Ms Le Couteur, I would assume that, but I will take the question on notice.

**MS HUNTER:** A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Ms Hunter.

**MS HUNTER:** Chief Minister, is the government collecting any data on the affordability of community housing at 74.9 per cent of market rent, particularly for those households that are not eligible for public housing but struggle with private rental prices?

**MR STANHOPE:** I will have to take that question on notice, Mr Speaker. I am more than happy to do that.

### **Federal government—buildings**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Chief Minister and relates to the half a billion dollar government building. Chief Minister, this morning at the Press Club, when defending your choice to build a half a billion dollar office building, you referenced the federal government departments moving into A-grade office buildings. Chief Minister, how many federal government departments, excluding heritage listed buildings and the specialised ASIO building, are located in buildings owned by the federal government?

**MR STANHOPE:** I have to confess—and I confess blushing—that I am not aware of the commonwealth government's accommodation policies.

**Mr Coe:** You spoke very confidently this morning.

**MR STANHOPE:** No, I did not. I did not make any comment about ownership. I made comment about the fact the commonwealth has a policy. This is the issue. We

get to the tintacks of this issue. Is the Liberal's objection that they think the building should be privately owned? Is that the issue? Besides your objection per se to the government office block, it is just the method of construction, is it? Is your concern about the method of construction, the ownership? The Liberals are frustrated financially because they do not stand for anything. It is just opposition for opposition's sake.

**Mrs Dunne:** On a point of order.

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Stop the clock. Mrs Dunne has a point of order.

**Mrs Dunne:** I have two points of order.

**MR SPEAKER:** We will take one at a time.

**Mrs Dunne:** I ask you to draw the Chief Minister's attention to the provisions of standing order 42. He should address you. He should not turn his back to you. Secondly, the standing orders in relation to the question require that he answer the question directly and be directly relevant to the question, which was about the proportion of ownership of commonwealth offices.

**MR SPEAKER:** Both points of order from Mrs Dunne are upheld. Chief Minister, do you wish to add anything further?

**MR STANHOPE:** On the point of order, Mr Speaker, I am not responsible for the commonwealth's office accommodation policies. I suggest that the question is out of order.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Chief Minister, if you and your government cannot maintain and refurbish office blocks that the government currently owns, how can the community have confidence that you can maintain a \$430 million office block?

**MR STANHOPE:** Goodness me! So, Mr Doszpot, nothing ever changes. You actually maintain an asset forever. You never look to renew; you never look to rebuild. Is that the Liberal Party's position in relation to infrastructure—that you have a building, you have a piece of infrastructure, you never change it, you never move, you never look to do something better? Do you never accept that maybe an option that is faced by building owners is to actually start again, that they will rebuild, that they will actually look at a property portfolio and decide from time to time that they might wish to sell some of it, that there is advantage actually in disposing of a property and building elsewhere, and that you do not do your cost-benefit?

Goodness me! Is this the extent and the maturity of the Liberal Party's thinking or understanding about infrastructure and its maintenance—that, in the first place, the government should never build and own its own office accommodation? Is it the Liberal Party's position that only the private sector has the right to own offices in which public servants are accommodated—a Liberal Party position against ownership

by governments of property? Position No 1 that we discovered today in relation to the Liberal Party's attitude to an investment by this government in an office block that is owned is that they do not like governments owning buildings and—

**Mrs Dunne:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

**MR STANHOPE:** secondly, you should only ever repair and retrofit; you should never build a new building.

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Chief Minister, sit down. Mrs Dunne, on a point of order.

**Mrs Dunne:** The standing orders require that the Chief Minister be directly relevant to the question. The question was about the maintenance of government buildings, and he has not answered the question.

**MR SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, if you could focus on the government's position, thank you.

**MR STANHOPE:** The government's position is that it is quite and entirely reasonable for us to build this building to save \$20 million a year and to create an asset which we own, which would be on our books and which would almost certainly appreciate in value. It is a winner whichever way you look at it. We understand the Liberals sold their headquarters, but I think that is a different issue—they went broke. *(Time expired.)*

**MS HUNTER:** Supplementary?

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Ms Hunter.

**MS HUNTER:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, has there been a cost-benefit analysis that includes ownership versus leasing, and are we able to see that analysis?

**MR STANHOPE:** As a result, I must say, initially of the Liberal Party's knee-jerk opposition to this building, we are now coming to understand the basis of their knee-jerk opposition. I just thought it was—

**MR SPEAKER:** Chief Minister.

**MR STANHOPE:** I thought it was just an attempt to—

**MR SPEAKER:** Ms Hunter asked a clear question, Chief Minister.

**MR STANHOPE:** And I am about to answer it. I thought it was an attempt at just a cheap political point. But we now see the philosophical underpinning—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR STANHOPE:** We see the philosophical underpinning—

**MR SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, I have asked you to come to the question specifically. It has got nothing to do with the Liberal Party. Ms Hunter asked you a clear question.

**Mr Hargreaves:** The Liberal Party are irrelevant.

**MR SPEAKER:** The question has nothing to do with the Liberal Party.

**MR STANHOPE:** I think it is relevant but—

*Members interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order!

**MR STANHOPE:** The government has done a detailed economic analysis that underpins the business case. Indeed I can tell you, as I have, that the advice that the government received in relation to this was that direct economic benefit or saving to the government, the community, is over \$19 million, with indirect costs more difficult to quantify but somewhere in the order of \$15 million. We are talking potentially of in excess of \$30 million of economic benefit every year if we co-locate our public servants in this building.

We are talking about co-locating public servants that are currently housed in 19 separate buildings across the territory—currently located in 19 separate buildings, and our proposal is to bring them together in a single, central building appropriate to their circumstance and appropriate to our needs. It is a great proposal, it is a good proposal and it is something that we will proudly deliver.

In relation to the available information around economic analysis, I have already asked the department, in anticipation of the question today, to gather together the material that actually reflects the economic analysis, the business case and the savings, and we will release it.

**MR SMYTH:** A supplementary, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Chief Minister, has the government done any analysis of the impact on the property market vacancy rate if the government goes ahead with this proposal?

**MR STANHOPE:** Of course we are mindful of and sensitive to the implications and we have given consideration to those issues. But at the end of the day we have taken decisions in relation to what we believe is in the best interests of the government and our public service, and what is in the public interest. We will make our decision on the basis of what we believe to be in the public interest and what we believe to be in the best interests of the ACT. We start from the position where our advice on our economic analysis is that we will save in the order, directly, of \$20 million a year and

directly and indirectly in excess of \$30 million a year. And I cannot for the life of me understand why the Liberal Party would turn its back on a \$30 million saving.

In relation to the question of vacant buildings, as members would be aware if they paid attention to the detail of the budget, the government has offered waivers directly in relation to change of use, in relation to stamp duty, for the retrofitting of those buildings, to meet desirable outcomes. We have been sensitive, we have responded, and we have provided incredibly generous conditions to encourage the redevelopment of vacant office blocks, not just in Civic but indeed in each of the town centres, and we have extended that even beyond the town centres in relation to the possible achievement of agreed outcomes through the retrofitting. So we have responded incredibly generously and positively to the needs of the property sector.

### **Childcare—costs**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Children and Young People. Minister, last week you announced \$60 million in spending on childcare in the territory. Minister, earlier this week the media reported United Voice ACT branch manager, Yvette Berry, as saying “the package would have little impact on reducing fees”. It is well known that Canberra families pay the highest childcare fees in the country, \$60 a week more than anywhere else, and, since you became minister, the cost of childcare in the territory has risen by almost 11 per cent, which is close to double the CPI for the same period. Minister, exactly how will your \$60 million package reduce the financial burden on Canberra families for childcare?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Hanson for his question. I think it was United Voice that also quoted that it was good to see government put their money where their mouth is. That is a good endorsement of this \$60 million package.

**Mr Corbell:** There is some selective quoting going on.

**MS BURCH:** Yes, selective quoting. This package puts in two childcare services—120 places in the north and 120-plus places in the south. The north one is part of an early childhood education centre.

The package also brings on line five sites that are available to those in the sector and the community who have an interest in bringing on line additional childcare services. This package goes to \$9 million worth of capital upgrades to services. That is a direct support to community-based organisations in facilities to cover increased placements. I think anyone will say that improved opportunities and choices for parents are a good thing. This package will improve the choices and opportunities for Canberra families in accessing childcare services. We also know that a market that offers more choice and opportunities can influence the price of children’s services.

Those opposite refer to increases in the cost of childcare services but they forget to say that the federal Labor government has increased the support to families. Out-of-pocket cost, the cost for childcare, continues to decrease or has decreased under the Labor government. And that is good news for Canberra families.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, a supplementary?

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, why under your watch has the cost of childcare in Canberra increased by around twice the rate of the CPI?

**MS BURCH:** Also under my watch we have brought on an additional 1,000 childcare places here in the ACT. Those opposite forget to bring that in as well. The cost of childcare is determined by the centre. That is a factor that is foremost. Whilst they are self-determining, they choose their cost for services. I know, as I move around the childcare services sector and talk with families, that the important thing for families is choice, accessibility and the quality of the provision of their early education and care services.

When we combine the childcare rebate and the childcare benefit there are significant supports to Canberra families, but we recognise that with the national reforms there will be challenges for families across the sector, which is why we have invested \$60 million across capital infrastructure, across capital upgrades and across producing more market competition with the five sites. We also go, in respecting the workforce, to putting in a scholarship program for them. So this government is investing in children's services.

I will be interested to hear tomorrow in the opposition's budget reply how they will address the implementation of quality children's services, because the only thing I have heard from them over there is the centralised waiting list. For the life of me I do not understand how that will impact on costs for childcare services.

**Mrs Dunne:** The Chief Minister agrees with me.

**MS BURCH:** He does not, Ms Dunne, and you know that. I would ask Ms Dunne again to provide the policy outline of the centralised waiting list and how that will improve quality, reduce waiting times, reduce cost or indeed support a workforce.

**MRS DUNNE:** A supplementary question, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Yes, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, what programs and processes do you have in place to ensure that your so-called \$60 million worth of spending will enable childcare centres in Canberra to be ready to meet the new challenges on 1 January 2012?

**MS BURCH:** The package has been welcomed by the sector. I remind those opposite that all of our services—that is, every single long-day care centre here in the ACT—already meet the over-two carer-to-child ratio. That is something that I think I pointed out that Ms Dunne did not quite get in her earlier media releases, where she did not understand the environment and the sector here in the ACT. So she gets it wrong.

Close to 40 per cent, and I think increasingly over 40 per cent, of our services already meet the under-two ratios of carer to child. We are investing \$9 million in capital

upgrades to support those sectors. That is on top of an ongoing capital program that we have had for many a day, Ms Dunne, about supporting—

**Mrs Dunne:** Mrs.

**MS BURCH:** I do apologise, Mrs Dunne.

*Members interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**MS BURCH:** Preciousness, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Ms Burch, I think it would be appropriate to try and get it right.

**MS BURCH:** I did apologise and I did call her Mrs Dunne.

**MR SPEAKER:** Thank you. Is that it? Further supplementary questions?

**Mrs Dunne:** Yes, Mr Speaker.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hargreaves, you were seeking the call?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes, I did. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**Mrs Dunne:** Sorry; who's got the supplementary question?

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hargreaves.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I thank Mrs Dunne for making—

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hargreaves!

**MR HARGREAVES:** No, sincerely, I thank Mrs Dunne for giving way.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Hargreaves, just the question.

**MR HARGREAVES:** My supplementary question to the minister is: is in fact this initiative in response to pressures in the sector? How many families will actually benefit from this, and isn't this a case of good news over not so good news?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Mr Hargreaves for his interest in children's services. This is of benefit to Canberra families. We know that young Canberra families rely on access and choice within childcare so that they can participate in training or other commitments they have to their broader family and to society. We have estimated that up to 800 new additional places can come on line through this package; that is, through the 120 in the north, 120 in the south and the five centres that will come on. We know and the sector now knows that the larger centres are financially viable, so if we add those, if we say the hallmark now is for the larger centres of around 100, we

know there are 800 places, up to, about, that can be delivered through that. That is an absolute benefit to Canberra families. That is in addition.

Can I just remind those in this chamber that over the last two years over 1,000 new childcare places have been brought on line across the service sector. The regulation unit and indeed the office for children and youth services have worked very closely with the sector. I convened a roundtable where over 70 representatives turned up—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Coe.

**MS BURCH:** and I listened to them and their concerns, recognising that the quality framework is the thing they must bring in, they are committed to do. They have looked to me for support and this is what we have done.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**MS BURCH:** We have responded with \$16 million and again I wait to see a single cent come from them, because last election those opposite stole—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MS BURCH:** They did not put it in their costings, but the day before the election the sudden thought bubble was: “Two centres; one north, one south.” That is what we have delivered.

### **Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—personal duress alarms**

**MRS DUNNE:** My question is to the Minister for Children and Young People. Minister, on 17 February 2011 in question time, you took on notice a question in relation to the issuing of personal duress alarms to Bimberi staff and MSS security guards. Hansard published your answer on 10 March 2011. The *Hansard* stated:

... duress alarms are issued to all operational staff ...

On the same day, 10 March, you took on notice a question relating to the issuing of a personal duress alarm to a woodwork trainer. You signed that answer on 21 April 2011 and the Secretariat received your answer on 2 May, the same day that I received it. You stated in that answer:

In the past there have been no comprehensive records in relation to the allocation of duress alarms. This has been rectified and improved record keeping was introduced in 2011.

You also stated:

The Trainer ... was issued with a personal duress alarm on 3 February 2011.

Minister, if no comprehensive records were kept until the end of 2010, how confident are you in your earlier answer that duress alarms are issued to all operational staff?

**MS BURCH:** My advice in relation to the first question is that the policy is that duress alarms are issued to all staff. On the follow-up question, and I know the question that Mrs Dunne is referring to, the department has clarified that, with unfortunately poor record keeping, the confirmation of that being an actuality each and every day was not there. The advice now to me is that, on the return from holiday leave, they can confirm that the duress alarm was issued to that woodwork teacher.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mrs Dunne, a supplementary?

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, Mr Speaker. Minister, did you mislead the Assembly when you started that duress alarms are issued to all operational staff when the assertion was not supported by comprehensive records and, if so, will you now correct the record and apologise to the Assembly?

**MS BURCH:** No, I do not believe I misled the Assembly. I provided an answer that I gave in good faith on the advice that was available to me at the time.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Mr Seselja?

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, if the woodwork trainer was not issued with a personal duress alarm until 3 February 2011, how many other operational staff were not issued with alarms until after comprehensive record keeping was implemented?

**MS BURCH:** Now that we have comprehensive, accurate record keeping in place, a track of that will be able to be recorded.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Seselja, a supplementary?

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, even allowing for the Easter break, why did it take until 2 May 2011 for your answer to the 10 March 2011 question, which you signed on 21 April, to travel down two floors to the Secretariat?

**MS BURCH:** I do not have an absolute answer for that. There was a holiday break—if the staff were not in my office. I am quite happy to go back to my office and ensure that in future answers are expedited from my office down to the Secretariat.

### **Low income households—assistance**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water. Minister, in yesterday's 2011-12 budget there was a range of measures to help low income households in Canberra to manage the rising cost of living. Minister, could you please outline to the Assembly some of these measures.

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Ms Porter for the question because the government has announced a very extensive range of measures in the budget yesterday to support low

income households in Canberra. The investment in total, across both capital activity and recurrent expenditure, is in the order of \$25 million worth of investment, to reach out to those 25,000 households across the ACT who are the lowest income earners, who are receiving benefits or payments through various concession arrangements and who need support to deal with issues around utility costs.

This, of course, is the appropriate measure for a government to adopt, rather than the broad and simplistic assertion we hear from those opposite that everyone, regardless of their income, needs help with the price of living. We instead focus on those who earn low incomes and who are particularly vulnerable to price movements. That is the rational and just approach to these measures, because the alternative is to extend relief to those on high incomes as well as those on low incomes. That, indeed, is the policy of those opposite. Those opposite would seem to be arguing that it is just as just to give price impact relief to people who live in big homes on Mugga Way or in Forrest or in O'Malley as it is to invest in supporting low income households who really face particular pressures.

*Members interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Order! Mr Corbell, I believe Ms Porter's question was about the budget.

**MR CORBELL:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, but I think it is, of course, worth highlighting the obscurity of alternative approaches.

The government has implemented a range of measures. One of these in the budget yesterday is over \$4 million to support over 4,000 Canberra households with the costs of electricity and water. These measures will operate to expand the outreach program that was trialled in the current financial year. These measures include retrofitting of both social and community housing and for people who live in private rental accommodation with better insulation, better curtains and energy-efficient appliances and water-efficient appliances. So energy-efficient fridges, water-efficient washing machines and so on will save these households between \$100 and \$400 a year—between \$100 and \$400 a year less on their water and energy bill because of this investment. This is a very important step forward.

On top of that, we know exactly what sorts of savings we can achieve and how the program will operate. We are going to reach out and double the energy-efficient appliance distribution that was carried out in 2010 to a broad range of community welfare organisations like St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army. We will be trialling free professional home energy efficiency assessments. We will be putting in place energy and water efficiency retrofitting, retrofitting of rental properties with appropriate measures. Energy efficiency officers will be placed in four community welfare organisations to implement this program, and it will be open to everyone who holds concession cards and to other low income earners who face hardship and who meet the eligibility requirements.

This is just one aspect of the government's measures to properly support those who are most vulnerable, to assist them with the rising cost of energy and water in the territory.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Ms Porter?

**MS PORTER:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Minister, how far will this money go to address the rising cost of living, especially with regard to energy and water bills, following the news recently that water prices will rise from 1 July?

**MR CORBELL:** At the time that the ICRC announced its review of the price path in relation to water in the territory, I said that the government would respond to that. Yesterday, the government delivered on that promise.

We are spending \$12.3 million over the next four years to increase the concessions payment regime for those lowest income households. This means additional assistance of up to \$130 per year for each and every one of 25,000 households across the territory. The lowest income households, the poorest households in our community, are getting that very significant level of assistance with their water and energy costs.

How could the opposition criticise that? How can they dismiss that level of support to those who are most vulnerable, who are the poorest, who are the most vulnerable to changes in prices around essential services?

This investment, of course, comes on top of an investment in last year's budget that saw a \$20 increase per annum in the energy concession. Over the past two years, this government will have provided an increase in the total possible energy concession available to low income households of \$150 per year—\$150 per year to the 25,000 lowest income households across the territory. That is the response from a Labor government to assisting the poorest and the most vulnerable in our community. And all that those opposite can do is dismiss it, make it a joke, when in fact it will not be a joke for those households that get that assistance and that recognise it is helping them with the cost of essential utility services.

**MR SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Mr Hargreaves?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Thanks very much, Mr Speaker. Minister, what support is being provided to those in ACT public housing to increase their energy efficiency and deal with the cost of living?

**MR CORBELL:** Energy efficiency, of course, is the other very important part of this equation, because what the government is doing is marrying up the price support, the cash support, we provide to households to deal with the price of utilities with improving the energy efficiency of their dwellings and reducing their overall demand for those utility services and, of course, in doing so, reducing their costs.

In this year's budget there is significant funding for improvements in energy efficiency in the public housing sector. This year we are providing \$20 million of additional funding to improve the energy efficiency of housing in the ACT, with the aim that within 10 years all houses rated lower than three stars for energy efficiency be brought up to a three-star standard. This \$8 million investment will double the capacity of public housing to implement this program. The funding will be used to

retrofit dwellings and conduct upgrades to heating and hot-water systems with the long-term aim of, as I said, bringing all Housing ACT properties up to a minimum energy efficiency rating of three stars.

In addition to that, the outreach program that I mentioned in my answer to the previous question will also be used to supplement those measures in a number of public housing properties. That will see supplementations, such as solar hot water or indeed a range of other measures, to improve energy efficiency.

Once again, those opposite are not interested. They talk about the cost of living, they talk about how concerned they are about the impact on battling families, but when you actually put a comprehensive program on the table that assists 25,000 households across the ACT, they are just not interested. They are not serious, they are not credible and they just do not care about serious policy measures to address these issues. (*Time expired.*)

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Seselja, a supplementary question?

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. What will be the net effect on low income earners of the latest support packages versus the slug that you are putting on them just as a result of your feed-in tariff?

**MR CORBELL:** The feed-in tariff measures are already factored into existing electricity prices. They have already been passed through by the regulator. They are already built into the prices that people are currently paying. What the government is now doing is reducing a whole range of impacts through these utility concession measures. What we are doing is bringing those down—

**Mr Seselja:** I raise a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**MR CORBELL:** and providing assistance in the order of \$150 worth of additional support.

**MR SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Corbell!

**Mr Seselja:** It goes to relevance. The question was very specific. It was about the feed-in tariff impact versus the impact of the latest concessions. It is a very simple question. He seems to be refusing to answer. I ask you to direct him to be directly relevant to the question.

**Mr Hargreaves:** On the point of order, Mr Speaker, the question was really around public housing.

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Seselja's point of order is upheld in the sense that I assume the minister is coming to his answer.

**MR CORBELL:** Mr Speaker, I have answered the question. There is no additional price impact from the feed-in tariff; that has already been announced.

**Mr Seselja:** No.

**MR CORBELL:** I have answered that question here in question time many times. We know what the price impact is per week; it is 50c per week per electricity customer currently. That is the price impact and I have answered that question many times before.

What this government is doing is investing in support to reduce costs for the poorest households in our community, for those who are most vulnerable.

*Mr Seselja interjecting—*

**MR SPEAKER:** Mr Seselja!

**MR CORBELL:** Of course Mr Seselja has no response to this measure because he knows that the government has called him on the simplistic assertions and the simplistic concerns he raises about cost of living, because we know that the cost of living pressures are most acute on low income households. What measures have the Liberal Party proposed to respond to that? They have not. (*Time expired.*)

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

### **Answer to question on notice**

#### **Question No 1589**

**MS HUNTER:** In accordance with standing order 118A, I request an explanation from the Treasurer about an unanswered question of mine, question No 1589.

**Ms Gallagher:** In relation to?

**MS HUNTER:** In relation to ethical investment.

**MS GALLAGHER:** Sorry, Ms Hunter, I have not even seen that cross my desk, so I will go back and chase up where that is. I was unaware it was overdue.

### **Gungahlin Drive extension**

Debate resumed.

**MS LE COUTEUR (Molonglo) (3.26):** The original motion and the amendment are both fairly largely factual discussions of the Gungahlin Drive extension. I will start with some reflections on Mr Coe's speech. Mr Coe said that the Greens were anti-Gungahlin and that the Greens were anti a road to Gungahlin. This is of course a misrepresentation of the Greens' position. The Greens' position on transport to Gungahlin is quite clear: Gungahlin deserves something better than the Gungahlin Drive extension.

We strongly supported and continue to support light rail. I am disappointed that Mr Coe is not here to hear what I am going to say, but if he was possibly a little bit older he might remember the history of how we ended up with the Gungahlin Drive

extension. I very strongly remember the tram outside Canberra Centre, and hopefully some other members do.

**Mr Barr:** I used to catch that. It was a bus, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No, it was a tram. Village Building Company brought up this tram to show us what we in fact could have for Gungahlin. This was shortly after self-government. It was during one of the early minority Labor governments.

**Mr Barr:** I wasn't old enough either.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, I know, Mr Barr; you were not involved in it. I cannot remember exactly who was the Chief Minister, but—

**Mr Barr:** I remember there was a bus that used to look like a tram.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No, I thought it was actually a tram, but I should not be indulging in this. But, if you remember back, Bob Winnell, who was and still is the CEO of Village Building, put forward a proposition to the ACT government and he basically said: "This is a wonderful new space, Gungahlin. It is not that far away from Civic. What would work really well in the spirit of what Walter Burley Griffin proposed would be light rail." And he said, "I will fund the light rail from Civic to Gungahlin."

It is, in my opinion, one of the big disappointments in Canberra's urban development that that was not taken up. If we had had light rail from Civic to Gungahlin I think we would be having some considerably different conversations about urban development and about transport policy in the ACT. At the time, I was very involved with the Australian Conservation Foundation and I was part of the steering committee that employed Professor Peter Newman from Western Australia to do a study on sustainable Canberra development. That strongly found that light rail would be a very positive solution for Gungahlin.

There are many reasons why we thought it was a good idea, but one reason why the residents of Gungahlin deserve better than what they have got, why they deserve light rail, is peak oil. Peak oil was an issue back in the early 1990s, late 1980s, when these decisions were being made and it is even more of an issue now. I was watching *Catalyst* last week and it was speculating that peak oil had already been reached and it was possibly the cause of the GFC. Whether or not it has exactly been reached or not, it is clearly going to be here soon. So what the residents of Gungahlin deserve is a transport option which is not totally dependent on abundant cheap oil supplies. Light rail, which is what the Greens and the conservation movement were proposing, was an option that would have provided this.

Also I would point out that the local environment deserves a lot better. Gungahlin Drive extension, as is well known, has put a freeway through native forest woodland and grassland close to the centre of Canberra. It went through four key nature reserves: Kaleen grasslands, Bruce and O'Connor ridges and the Black Mountain nature park. It has been a continuing disappointment that this has been the primary

solution for Gungahlin. That having been said, the Greens strongly believe that the people of Gungahlin deserve a good transport system and we regret that they have not got as good a transport system as they could have had.

Firstly, we will go to Mr Coe's motion. The first part is historically correct. It did have an earlier cost; the first part was initially going to be completed earlier and it is now going to be completed with extensions in June this year I understand. There have been issues with the construction of the GDE.

I was quite surprised by the things that Mr Coe called for, because basically all he is calling for is for the government to provide a series of pieces of factual information. Most of us use questions on notice for that rather than a whole motion, but I appreciate that the Liberal Party may not have a lot of motions and so maybe that seemed like the thing to do.

Moving now to Mr Stanhope's amendment, again this is very factual. I guess the big advantage to this is that it has updated the information in Mr Coe's motion and has in fact answered the things that Mr Coe called upon the government to do. So clearly from that point of view it is a superior motion.

I am not really quite sure why we are doing this. I think that the whole Assembly is committed to—I hope the whole Assembly is committed to—a good transport outcome for Gungahlin. The issues in Gungahlin are affecting the whole of north Canberra and it is clear that further work needs to be done on this issue. One thing that I regret that neither Mr Coe nor Mr Stanhope has mentioned is the ongoing issues down Northbourne Avenue. I understand the government has some funding for a feasibility study to do something to this major entrance to Canberra. I very much look forward to work progressing on that because we have got to fix Northbourne Avenue. We have got to look at the whole of north Canberra as a holistic transport system and fix the problems.

Both Mr Coe's motion and Mr Stanhope's amendment with updates are fairly factual, so I signal that the Greens will be supporting the amendment.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo) (3.33): I would like to thank Mr Coe for bringing this important motion before the Assembly today. As he said, it is iconic—I would use the word “indicative”—of this government.

There is no question that you only need to say the word “GDE” and everybody rolls their eyes and they know exactly what you mean. What it means is essentially what this government stands for, and that is that you are going to pay more, you are going to get less and you are going to wait longer. That applies to the GDE in spades but it also applies to many other aspects of this government, be it the health system or other services that are being provided.

There is no question that the GDE is an important part of the infrastructure of the Canberra community and, given the size and shape of our city, which is essentially long and skinny, that that route that comes down from Gungahlin feeding into our city is vitally important. If this government had had the foresight to make adequate

planning decisions, we would be enjoying this roadway today. The good people of Gungahlin and others that use that road would be driving now on a road that was not congested and was not so plagued by the problems that it has, particularly at peak times. They would be driving on an unblocked, two-lane road, they would have been doing so for years and we would have had far less cost impact upon our budget.

It was this government that first committed to building the road back in 2001 and at that stage they said it was going to cost us \$53 million. How much is it going to cost? The government still cannot tell us what the final cost will be, but over 10 years later it is about \$200 million. There is a figure in the budget of, I think, \$194 million or so. But, given the cost blow-outs and the delays in this project, until it is finished I am loath to say that that is what the cost of this project will be because this, amongst many other projects that this government has delivered or failed to deliver, has been plagued by cost overruns.

What we do know, though, is the cost of the artwork along the way. That is \$750,000, I believe, for the artwork on the side of the road. Mr Stanhope accuses anybody who might not like that artwork or who thinks it is not a high priority and who would have preferred to see that money allocated to perhaps duplication of the road at an earlier stage as being a redneck or a philistine who is engaging in some tiresome debate. So, as the people of Gungahlin sit in their cars that are stationary or crawling along, they look at that public art and think of those words from Mr Stanhope and their anger just increases.

The government seem to think that taking 10 years to build a road is a model of planning and they are always lauding how well they are doing with infrastructure. Certainly they spend a lot of money—no-one questions that—and this road is going to be delivered for about four times the cost originally estimated. Mr Stanhope said in 2001 that we would have a two-lane road built by 2004 at a cost of \$53 million, but he did not actually sign the first contract until after that date, until November 2005. So a year after the project was due to be delivered as a two-lane road the government had not even signed the contract. It is just a mockery. And the second contract was not signed until May 2006, two years after the road was originally scheduled to be finished.

The final one-lane road was complete in April 2008 but that was four years overdue and at a cost of \$120 million. And, importantly, it is a road that as it was delivered was already over capacity. That was not a surprise to anyone, least of all to the government. They had been told that it would be over capacity. The urban services engineering feasibility study into the GDE conducted in June 2002 told them that “GDE will be busy upon opening and that widening to four lanes will need to be considered soon after the opening of the initial construction”. So they knew back in 2002 that this road was going to be full when they opened it.

Does that remind you of anything, Madam Assistant Speaker? I reflect on the jail, another great infrastructure project delivered by the Labor government, another infrastructure program that on the day it opened was already full. And they knew that was the case. They had reduced it in scope, as they did with this. They reduced this road from two lanes to one, they reduced the jail from 374 beds to 300, and told the

community it would be okay, all the time knowing that on the opening of these infrastructure programs they would be already full and then they would have to retrofit.

That costs us money and it causes people aggravation and delay. The government is doing it for the road and it is going to do it for the jail. Money is in the budget this year for scoping to work out how it is going to try and fix those infrastructure problems, those capacity issues, it has at the jail. So this is clearly a government that has not learned, that continues to repeat the same problems. And it is not just the experts who say that; certainly the community do. The Gungahlin Community Council spokesperson is reported to have said to the ABC:

“The entire community’s been saying that not duplicating it from day one was a silly move,” he said.

“I think if there’s any disappointment, it’s disappointment that it’s taken so long.”

So we already knew in 2002 that it was not going to have the capacity, and the Canberra Liberals were saying this. We said it was not going to have the capacity. We then in 2008, in the lead-up to the election, took this as a policy. And I remember this clearly because this was going to be a significant policy announcement for the Canberra Liberals. We had the front page of the *CityNews*. That got to the Labor Party on the evening before and they came out with a panicked, rushed policy announcement, a backflip, an utter backflip, and said, “We are going to do it—us too, me too,” because they knew that the Canberra Liberals were right. We have been right all along, and it is very clear that the only reason we have this road that is now being duplicated is because the Canberra Liberals drove this as an issue in the 2008 election.

The delays that we have seen have been inexcusable and the money that it has cost the community has been inexcusable and quite unnecessary. According to the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, during the time between promising to build the extension and the first actual signing of contracts, the road construction and maintenance costs increased by 28 per cent. So the delays that we have seen, the procrastination, the failure to actually build a road with any vision, has cost ACT taxpayers enormous amounts of money, millions and millions of dollars.

Hopefully we will get this road duplicated. I think the time frame is about March or April next year. But, given this government’s record, we still have to wait and see if that is actually going to occur. They have let us down. I have already mentioned the AMC, but we can look at recent projects, like the hospital car park that blew its budget and is well over time and the women and children’s hospital, to see that when it comes to almost any infrastructure project this government is incapable of delivering anything on time or on budget.

Their Greens colleagues certainly have got a different approach to the GDE. They never wanted the road. They were worried about some environmental issue. I am not quite sure what it was but the quote from Meredith Hunter was:

That is probably a straightforward one for the Greens. We did not believe that was the right road to build in the first place ...

They probably do not want any road. We heard Meredith Hunter this morning talking about the Majura Parkway. They are just anti road. They do not want roads. I am not sure how we are all going to get around. I know that Caroline Le Couteur wants to get us back to the caves. In the first media conference she did she said, “We don’t want to get back to the caves yet,” or something. So she wants us to go there but just not quite yet. But the party are opposed to development. They are opposed to the motor vehicle. They do not care about people in the suburbs: how are they going to get to the city if not on a road?

If the Greens were left to run this place, and clearly they do have a significant influence on the way this government runs the place, we would see the people of Gungahlin and the people in the outer suburbs of the ACT severely disadvantaged while the Greens pursue their pet projects, their environmental obsessions. We are all environmentally aware but they are obsessed to the point that they do not want roads. I think it is quite bizarre.

It is disappointing that this road has taken so long. The biggest disappointment is for the people of Gungahlin. I commend Mr Coe for bringing this motion before the Assembly today.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (3.43): It is quite ironic that on the day we have this motion we saw what happened on the GDE this morning—an absolute disaster: another breakdown, another diversion, people being inconvenienced and the loss of productivity. It is such a common event with the management of this project by this government.

But let me start with some of the things that you said, Madam Assistant Speaker Le Couteur. You said that the Greens were not anti Gungahlin. I thought you said that you were not anti Gungahlin Drive. But, as Mr Hanson has just pointed out, that was not what your leader said. I will quote it again. Meredith Hunter, on 24 March 2010, said:

That is probably a straightforward one for the Greens. We did not believe that was the right road to build in the first place ...

So there we have it: no major additional road into Gungahlin. That is the Greens’ position on this. Again, as Mr Hanson has just said, if you look at some of the comments surrounding the Majura Parkway this morning, I guess there is doubt as to whether or not the Greens will support that as well.

The problem for the people of Canberra is that this government does not have the quality control in its processes and does not have the commitment to seeking value for money for the people of the ACT. I am glad Mr Stanhope is here because he deserves a history lesson. He said this morning that the Liberals never intended to build this road—wrong. He said that it was in our last budget—wrong. Money was appropriated to start this work across two budgets—2000-01 and 2001-02.

Mr Stanhope, in his own ministerial code of conduct, says ministers should find out and verify the things they state are correct or they should come back and correct the

record. I look forward to Mr Stanhope being the honourable man that he is—the honourable gentleman—and, when I am finished, standing up and apologising for getting it wrong. If he doubts it, on page 126 of the 2000-01 budget is table 5.4.1—the traffic congestion and road safety improvement program—which in 2000-01 sought \$2.7 million worth of capital works money appropriated. On page 134, for 2001-02 there is \$28,999,000 appropriated for the works. Money was appropriated across two budgets, contrary to what the Chief Minister said, to build this project.

Mr Stanhope asserts that you could never have done it for the money. He accepted in the run-up to the 2001 election that you could because his spokesman, Mr Corbell, was out there telling people, “We’ll build this road on the western alignment on time, on budget.” That was the grab. Mr Corbell actually got caught. You would not know this, Madam Assistant Speaker, but he would go to some meetings and say, “Yes, we’re in favour of the road,” and then he would go to other meetings and say, “We’re not in favour of the road on that alignment.” Mr Corbell got caught out for telling people what he thought they wanted to hear.

But the one consistent thing Mr Corbell did in that period was to say, “We will build this road on time and on budget.” On time and on budget was \$53 million worth of expenditure, all of which was to be completed by the 2004-05 year. It was to open on 1 July 2005. As Hanson has just pointed out, they had not even signed a contract on 1 July 2005. Their clear commitment in the lead-up to the 2001 budget was on time, on budget. They accepted the funding. It is very good to come back 10 years later and say, “You could never have done it for that money,” but you did accept it at the time.

The money had three components: one for Gungahlin Drive, north of Belconnen Way, \$32 million; the Caswell Drive duplication, \$6 million; and the Glenloch Interchange, \$15 million—a total of \$53 million. As the Chief Minister so rightly pointed out this morning, of course, the further you go back in time the cheaper the building rate per kilometre. We heard this morning that the GDE is now costing something like \$20 million a kilometre. The Majura Parkway is now \$26 million a kilometre for the dual carriageway. That is what I think I heard the Chief Minister say this morning.

Back in 2005, of course, it would have been cheaper. But if you had started it in 2001, when you should have done, as per your promise at that election, then it would have been much cheaper and you could have achieved the \$53 million. If you did not take the ludicrous approach of splitting it into such an awkward delivery pattern of contracts then, of course, it would have been much cheaper—building one bridge at a time and then coming back. I love the bit in the amendment by Mr Stanhope where we have now got GDE stage 1 and stage 2. It is almost like it was planned to be a mess. They actually went out of their way to have a two-stage mess. I see they are not learning. We see there is \$144 million in the capital works budget this year for what they are saying is their half of the Majura Parkway because we expect Defence to fund it. Will we repeat the mistake again and build half a road? Will we build half a government office block? Who knows?

It is an excellent motion from Mr Coe. It is excellent because Gungahlin Drive connecting with the Tuggeranong Parkway is a key transport link within the ACT road network. It is critical for the public and for business that these roads are able to

function efficiently. It is also critical that the delivery of these roads is managed effectively. The management of the project to duplicate Gungahlin Drive and the upgrade of the Glenloch Interchange really does raise serious questions about the capacity of the Labor government to undertake these types of projects.

Mr Hanson rightly points out that the government has not delivered any major project on time or on budget in the last decade. It is an absolute disgrace that Gungahlin Drive had to be duplicated as a result of this government's appalling decision to build it as a single-lane major arterial road when it had been advised by its officials that before it was finished it would be at capacity. Who builds a road that has already reached its capacity before it is finished? Jon Stanhope and his government do. It is also amazing that the work to duplicate Gungahlin Drive and to upgrade the Glenloch Interchange has been undertaken as a series of separate contracts rather than a single contract. In some ways, the management of these projects really does warrant an evaluation by the Auditor-General at least.

In the case of Gungahlin Drive, some of the bridges required for duplication have been completed for many months, yet the roadworks to connect these bridges are only now being undertaken. The project to duplicate the connecting roadwork is proceeding at a very rapid pace, and that would appear to be to the credit of the contractor involved. Of course, we have had the issue of the collapse of the bridge over the Barton Highway that caused some delay to the overall project. But even that now appears to be nearing completion.

As an overall project, the issue of separate contracts for different pieces of work has resulted in inefficiencies and delays, such that virtually the entire length of Gungahlin Drive is currently limited to 60 kilometres per hour. This has been the case for many weeks and it is causing considerable frustration before you get the fiasco that we heard of this morning where the southbound lanes of Gungahlin Drive have been closed because of the roadworks and the breakdown of the machinery.

What chaos and inconvenience this is causing to people not just in Gungahlin but across the city, whether in Belconnen, central Canberra or stations further south. It causes inconvenience, and how unnecessary if a proper, standard two-lane arterial road had been built in the first place. The only place to look for blame for this fiasco is with the government. This Labor government had no idea what it was doing when it approved Gungahlin Drive as a single-lane road.

The Chief Minister made much this morning of what he assumed was the practice of the former Liberal government when he said that we always built one lane and then we came back and we did it. I am not sure that is true. He then claimed that, indeed, this was the way that the NCDC did it. Again, that is not true. I have actually spoken to somebody who was in the first ACT Legislative Assembly. I was told that they had discussions in the 1970s with the NCDC about the size of Parkes Way when Parkes Way was being built. If you were here before Parkes Way, you used to travel around the lake, the northern perimeter of the lake, just on Lady Denman Drive. I was told that they said they were going to build a single-lane road, with the tunnel through Acton—the cut-and-cover, which has proved effective there and would have proved just as effective on the route that we had chosen—but they argued that that was not

the way to build this road back in the 1970s. These were Liberal members of the original ACT Legislative Assembly. They recognised that on key roads such as this, in the broad context of servicing Canberra, they should not be built as single lanes because of all the problems that we see so clearly with the current Gungahlin Drive problem.

With regard to Glenloch Interchange, you really have to ask what is happening with the project. I think it is a disgrace that the project is taking as long as it is to complete. The whole designs had some simplicity when we started with them. Of course, because of promises Mr Corbell made, the whole thing has become a fiasco. The planning of it was just appalling. Work is proceeding at what appears to be a snail's pace.

I would like to commend Mr Coe for bringing on this motion. It is very important for the people directly in his electorate, as it is in mine, and I look forward to the Chief Minister apologising and correcting the record for the mistakes he made this morning. *(Time expired.)*

Question put:

That **Mr Stanhope's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10

Noes 5

Mr Barr	Ms Hunter	Mr Coe	Mr Smyth
Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Doszpot	
Ms Burch	Ms Porter	Mr Hanson	
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Seselja	
Mr Hargreaves	Mr Stanhope		

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Sustainability strategies**

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (3.57): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) that the Government has not delivered a number of key Government strategies, policies and legislative reforms that related to improving the sustainability of the ACT in a timely manner, including:

(i) the Sustainable Energy Policy for the ACT;

- (ii) Weathering the Change–Action Plan 2;
  - (iii) the ACT Sustainable Waste Strategy;
  - (iv) the Sustainable Transport Action Plan / Transport for Canberra Plan;  
and
  - (v) the Review of the Nature Conservation Act;
- (b) that the Government has not met a number of public commitments about when these strategies would be finalised;
  - (c) that the Government has undertaken little follow-up consultation during the ongoing development of these strategies and reviews;
  - (d) that the development and implementation of these strategies are essential to ensure the ACT Government meets its commitment to a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions on 1990 levels by 2020; and
  - (e) that the NoWaste by 2010 strategy expired last year; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) table in the Assembly, by the first sitting day in June 2011, timelines for the public consultation, finalisation and public release of these strategies, policies and legislative reforms listed in paragraph (1)(a); and
  - (b) complete the strategies, policies and legislative reforms within the timelines tabled pursuant to paragraph (2)(a).

I have brought this motion to this Assembly out of a mounting sense of unease and a need for accountability about the fact that the government are not delivering on a range of sustainability strategies in a timely manner, in spite of their vocal support for the direction of making Canberra a more sustainable city.

The Greens obviously have these issues as a priority for the ACT. It is a large part of our policy agenda, and sustainability issues are a large part of why people support our party and our role in parliaments around the country. We have seen over time that sustainability issues have become more mainstream, both with the public and with governments around the country. The public could be feeling reassured that governments are now taking sustainability issues seriously, yet, strangely enough, we are not seeing a significant shift in sustainability indicators.

Our greenhouse emissions in the main continue to rise, our waste per capita is rising, and we continue to under-invest in public transport while we build more roads and put more cars on the road. We continue to see a demise in our biodiversity with warnings of significant species loss over the next decades, much of which is a result of loss of habitat from urban sprawl.

Here in the ACT we have a Labor government that have certainly professed a strong commitment to sustainability issues over many years. They reflect a strong belief in

the Canberra community that sustainability is important, and if one were to read anything into the outcome of the 2008 election in the ACT, the Canberra community was sending a strong message to the ALP to think even more seriously about these issues and give them higher priority.

Yet I am starting to be concerned that, while perhaps the desire to improve sustainability exists within the government, the government as a whole is not prioritising sustainability issues nor integrating them into each and every government program effectively.

The recurring symptom of this systemic problem seems to be the failure of the government to deliver key strategies over the past two years, strategies that are fundamental to the direction of this city over the next decades and fundamental to improve its sustainability, to prepare for the impacts of climate change and a world change because of oil availability, a world where we will see rising costs of resources and food impacting our community, both households and businesses.

A smart city prepares for these challenges, not just by tweaking around the edges of policy and making a few offerings to pacify the so-called greenies, but by making long-term systematic changes to the way we do business. These long-term changes are the big-picture thinking that we need to see our government start to deliver on, and it will not be achieved without the full commitment of the whole of the government. This also means having a shared agenda right across government.

Treasury and the economic development department need to believe in this agenda as much as the environment department or the transport planners. It is pointless trying to deliver a sustainability agenda when half of government is tussling with the other half about the initiatives. Yet yesterday the Treasurer delivered another budget without climate, waste and transport strategies in place—another year when the implementation of strategies will not be properly funded in a coordinated way.

Ambitious sustainability objectives are all very well, but they are meaningless without real policies that then translate into real action from the government. This year's budget was a lost opportunity in many regards to getting started on a range of issues that we are keen to see advanced. The government must prioritise the delivery of these measures, because at the moment it seems that it is either a lack of political will, some sort of mismanagement or a lack of resources which means that these balls are being dropped.

I assume the minister will, when he stands up to speak, tell the Assembly that it is all under control and that the government can walk and chew gum at the same time. I assume the minister will lay out the work the government has done on sustainability issues in the last two years, and I would not necessarily dispute that there have been some outcomes.

But this motion is about holding the government to account on a range of commitments that have been made over the last couple of years that have not been delivered. It calls on the government to outline a time line for a suite of sustainability policies that it has failed to deliver on—the sustainable energy policy, the sustainable

transport action plan, the sustainable waste strategy, weathering the change action plan 2, and the review of the Nature Conservation Act.

It calls for the government not only to tell the Assembly when it will release the final strategies but also when it will engage in public consultation and the public release of these strategies, because the government has an obligation to keep the community informed about its progress, something which I am concerned is starting to slip.

Let us start firstly with the energy policy and action plan 2. It has simply been delay after delay by the government on climate change over the past two years, and now we are increasingly concerned that the delivery of a comprehensive and coordinated climate strategy is still months away. Public submissions on the energy policy closed over a year ago, and we have still not seen the final version, despite the fact the minister said we would see it before the end of last year.

The energy policy was a key item for the Greens in the ALP-Greens agreement—specifically, the completion of a draft energy policy by 2008 and a final policy by December 2009. These time lines were built on the fact that a very first draft was released some time in 2005 or 2006, if I recall correctly. The government has not done very well meeting any of these time lines, and that is partly why we are here today. I think the Greens have been very patient so far, but we are getting to the point of being deeply concerned.

What has in fact happened? In February 2009 the minister said that he thought the draft policy would be released at the end of March. By October of 2009 he said it would be released in December, and it was—just. On 21 December 2009, just before Christmas, the minister released the draft energy policy for public consultation, and we were very glad to see it. We even had January to put together a submission, although I am not sure that everybody appreciated it at that time of year.

We then expected to see the government's final energy policy within six months, perhaps released to coincide with the climate change targets legislation, but it did not come. In November 2010 the minister assured an annual reports hearing that the energy policy would be released before the end of 2010 with implementation in 2011. Once again, we were reassured, but six months later we still have not seen the policy. Importantly, nor have we received any indication from the minister as to why the delay has occurred. Instead, each sitting when the Greens ask the minister to explain when we will see the energy policy and action plan 2, he is vague with his answers and is now notably refusing to give a new time line. I have to confess that I imagine the minister has stopped being specific about when he will deliver on these strategies because he is concerned that the deadline will be missed again. Certainly history would suggest that is the case. This motion will ensure that the time lines for the energy policy are there for the community to see, because the lack of a current time line is unacceptable.

What is the minister now telling us about energy policy and action plan 2? In March Minister Corbell indicated it would be released with the climate change strategy action plan 2 later this year. In April he indicated that action plan 2 would not be coming until the federal government had settled on a carbon price policy—date

unknown. The minister was concerned that he was misrepresented on this issue when he again answered questions in question time yesterday, but he repeated it. He said:

... it would be prudent to have regard to developments at a federal level before concluding decisions at a territory level. That remains the government's position.

I take that to mean that the ACT is now waiting on federal government action, and that, as we know, could be a long wait. Yet we are able to go ahead and set a renewable energy target without waiting for the federal government, and we are able to set feed-in tariff policies without waiting for the federal government. I would put it to the minister that the only reason the government is ready to set a renewable energy target by tomorrow is that the climate change legislation obliges it to do so.

Then there is action plan 2, the consultation for which the minister committed to holding in the first quarter of 2011 and which will now be released when the ACT government, according to the minister, "has finalised its consideration of action plan 2". I do not think that is a very satisfactory response. It is vague and circular and does not really speak to any sense of accountability to the community.

Let me turn to the waste strategy. The government's no waste by 2010 strategy expired in December 2009, and yet it only released its draft for a new strategy in December 2010. Given how long we know it takes to finalise new government strategies, this leaves the ACT without a waste strategy for at least a year and probably more, and the old one and its accompanying action plan is so out of date it is almost irrelevant.

The resource recovery rate for the ACT has typically been up at around 75 per cent, the best in Australia. But the ACT has now dropped to about 69 per cent, and the target for next year is now 68 per cent, as we discovered in yesterday's budget. The government has dropped the ball on waste and no longer holds the title for having the highest waste recovery in the country.

What we are starting to see is the delayed impact of not addressing waste policy over the past five to six years. The government have to take full responsibility for this as it has happened on their watch. We are in desperate need of a new waste strategy which reflects current best practice and best technologies.

The waste strategy story is a little like the energy policy story. As we know, the no waste by 2010 strategy ended on 31 December 2009. The government reviewed the no waste strategy in 2008, and money was provided in the 2009-10 budget to develop a new waste strategy. The government had said it would have a discussion paper out for that by October 2009, suggesting that it intended to have a strategy to cover the 2010 year. By March 2010 we still had not seen the discussion paper or the strategy, and my colleague Ms Le Couteur asked where they were. Mr Corbell said the government was still working on them.

When in November 2010 we still had not seen any strategy or paper, the minister said they would be released later that year. Finally on 8 December 2010 the minister released a new draft ACT sustainable waste strategy 2010-25. Comments were due by

28 February this year, and we are hoping that it does not take the government as long to finalise that waste strategy as it has taken on the energy strategy, or we will still be waiting for it some time in the middle of 2012.

Let me turn to transport, because it is clearly a very significant area where the ACT needs to cut greenhouse emissions. With 23 per cent of total emissions in the ACT coming from transport, it is our second highest source of greenhouse gas emissions. We are unusually car dependent in this city, with the lowest rate of public transport of any capital city in Australia.

The government's own figures show that public transport patronage has stalled. In fact, it has even decreased in some recent years. When the Greens asked the government what targets needed to be achieved in the transport sector in order to meet our legislated 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction target, the transport minister, Mr Stanhope, deferred to the sustainable transport plan, which is apparently still in development. Everything apparently hinges on waiting for this plan.

As Mr Stanhope said in February 2010:

One of the highest priority policy initiatives being pursued within Territory and Municipal Services across the entire department is the sustainable transport action plan ... It is a number one priority for the government.

The government has continually made this promise, yet nothing has ever emerged. Not bad for the number one priority of the government! The plan is continually deferred. Mr Stanhope first announced in July 2009 that he would develop the sustainable transport action plan in the following six months. That did not happen. In fact, back then it was called the 2010-16 action plan, a title which understandably has now needed to be scrapped because we are in a transport policy vacuum.

The government's history on implementation of strategic transport plans is sketchy. The last 2004 policy was ineffectual when released, because the government ignored its recommendations. When Ms Le Couteur introduced a motion last year saying that the government did not implement many of the recommendations from the 2004 plan, the government even agreed to that point.

Let me finally turn to the Nature Conservation Act. I am pleased to say that, after many years, the government released a discussion paper for a review of this important act in November 2010. But when we sat down and thought through the government's time line for getting this act reviewed and giving consideration to the thought that the act may well need redrafting from the bottom up, I have to say that I am not hopeful that the government will complete this in the term of this Assembly. If that is the case, we are going to see a situation where in two terms of government, the government has not been able to deliver the review of our major piece of environmental protection legislation.

Almost more than any of the other strategies I have talked about today, this lack of timely action speaks to the government's priorities, priorities that never fail to deliver on land release but never quite manage to put in place a strategy for the protection of

our biodiversity while we rush out that land. So before we let that time line slip again, the government must outline when they will release their exposure draft, when the final bill will be released and when the consultation on that bill is expected. I would expect that if that time line is realistic, it would take us beyond the October 2012 election.

Let me conclude by commending the motion to the Assembly. It is important that we acknowledge these delays and that we put a process in place for the government to spell out when it is going to deliver the many initiatives that it has promised but failed to deliver so far. When you go through each of these items that we have listed in the motion, we find a litany of delay, obfuscation and inaction. We need strategies to know where we are going. We do not have those strategies in place, and it means that the action we are delivering is operating in a policy vacuum.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Minister for Energy and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (4.12): Mr Rattenbury's motion today is based on a deeply flawed understanding of how policies are developed by government and fails to acknowledge both the ambition and the breadth of the government's sustainability reforms, as well as its achievements to date. Before I address each of these matters, I want to firstly deal with some of the more fundamental issues.

From Mr Rattenbury's patronising lecture you would clearly think that policy development is a simple, straightforward and linear process which can be delivered according to strict timetables and which does not need to take account of an ever-changing policy context dealt up by both the federal government and other developments. The only way Mr Rattenbury's views would have any validity is if policies sprang from ideology—if we knew the answer from the beginning and simply worked back on it to justify it.

The government do not do that and we will not do it. Instead, we will develop policy first from a proper understanding of the problem we are dealing with and then undertake a comprehensive analysis of the options available to address it. It is a complex process and invariably it involves trade-off decisions around environmental, social and financial issues. Labor government policies have to solve problems and they have to work in the real world—a real world that includes, for instance, people suffering from financial hardship and a diminished ability to cope with some of the changes that are necessary to shift Canberra to a low carbon economy.

This process takes time, and I would like to remind members that we are dealing with a very wide array of policies here, most of which go to the heart of dealing with the so-called "wicked" problem of climate change. No jurisdiction anywhere in Australia or the world is doing this easily and no-one who is serious about dealing with climate change is going to prefer meeting some arbitrary time frame over getting it right.

My department is responsible for the development of all but one of the policies and strategies that Mr Rattenbury refers to. My department has prepared and continues to prepare detailed work programs for each of these and they are based on a series of important assumptions and considerations. These include staff availability, timeliness

in the delivery of reports and consultancies, interaction with other policies, public consultation and, within government itself, consideration and negotiation, including the cabinet consideration process. Each work program yields an expected delivery date which is provided to me and on which, in good faith, I base my public comments.

However, anticipated time lines sometimes do not eventuate for a wide variety of reasons, such as staff movements—and we are dealing here with highly skilled policy staff who are difficult to replace quickly—the impact of new priorities, changes in the national policy context, delays in the finalisation of consultancies, often for very good reasons, and longer than expected government consideration and negotiation.

Carping criticism from the sidelines is not going to change the harsh realities involved in the process of policy development. It also does not acknowledge that the government's commitment to these reforms, to these policies and strategies, remains as firm as ever. A few policies will be delivered later than originally anticipated, but they will be delivered and, when they are delivered, they will actually be workable.

I have no intention of lowering my expectations on the quality of work delivered to me and to government in order to meet some bizarre or arbitrary time line that Mr Rattenbury thinks should be met. Does he doubt the government's commitment? I note he and his colleagues are always happy to claim credit for the policy initiatives of the government, so surely he cannot be as dismissive of the processes necessary to deliver them—as dismissive as this motion suggests.

I will run through just a few of the actions that have been taken on sustainability by the government to date. Firstly, in relation to climate change, in May 2009 the government announced its goal of zero net emissions for the ACT by 2060. That was followed, of course, as members would recall, by the enactment of the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, which sets ambitious targets of a 40 per cent reduction based on 1990 levels by the year 2020, 80 per cent less than 1990 by 2050 and carbon neutrality by 2060.

Implementation of these measures will be guided into the future by action plan 2 of weathering the change, the ACT's climate change strategy, that is now being formulated and will provide the road map to achieving these goals. Action plan 2 will still be released in the first half of this year. Extensive consultation will be undertaken with the final action plan 2 and updated weathering the change released later this year.

In relation to energy policy, as part of the government's commitment to carbon neutrality in its own operations, and indeed to achieving carbon neutrality across the territory as a whole, the government is committed to the development of a sustainable energy policy, a draft of which has already been released for public comment. The policy will contain specific and measurable targets and ensure the equitable provision of energy and security of supply. It will reinforce the government's commitment to maintaining reliable electricity and natural gas supplies and the implementation and facilitation of renewable energy sources and the delivery of necessary infrastructure to meet consumer and industry expectations.

The policy and supporting programs will also facilitate the development of distributed energy and will increase the territory's focus on energy efficiency. The draft policy,

with commentary from its public exhibition and the consultation process and further analysis currently underway, will inform the final version. The Greens' suggestion that nothing is happening in relation to this policy is both misguided and wrong. Indeed, I would argue it is offensive to those policy officers who are working very hard on this particular project at the moment.

The policy will complement draft climate change action plan 2, which will outline potential measures to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets. Despite some assertions to the contrary, there has been broad consultation on the draft policy. Thirty-five submissions were received, broadly supportive of the policy's form and purpose. The finalised policy draws information obtained from submissions received and the two public fora conducted.

In terms of the issue of renewable energy, renewable energy targets will be set, as required by the ACT Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010. Those renewable energy targets will be set in accordance with the time frames outlined in the legislation. I find it passing strange that I am being criticised for meeting the statutory time frames in relation to the establishment of those targets. It seems a somewhat odd approach, unless, of course, the motivation is to try and get some attention for your own policy position rather than whether or not there has been any wrongdoing on the part of the government.

Turning to the issue of the appointment of the Climate Change Council, this is a very important advisory body and there have been a large number of expressions of interest. I want to make sure that we get a good, robust membership and a membership which is credible and provides important leadership and advisory capacity to the government. Those matters are currently being finalised. Again, I would draw to members' attention that I cannot unilaterally make appointments in relation to these types of bodies. They require whole-of-government approval and the necessary cabinet processes.

I would like to turn now to the issue of the development of the solar feed-in tariff and the issue of renewable energy generation. Of course, members will be aware that the government have been ambitious in developing and encouraging the deployment of renewable energy generation through our feed-in tariff arrangements. The scheme has proven to be very successful to date. As a result, there are more than 5,000 rooftop solar installations on households, community groups and business premises across the city, providing free and clean energy from the sun. Of course, as members would be aware, this government and this jurisdiction are leading the nation in the enhancement of the feed-in tariff to be made available to medium and large-scale renewable energy generation, an Australian first. Again, I would make the observation that this is not a simple area of policy.

The implementation of the mechanisms, for example, to provide for the reverse auction process for the large-scale feed-in tariff 40-megawatt option, which the government has announced it will conduct, is an incredibly complex area of policy that involves very detailed consideration of issues such as the operation of the national electricity law in relation to the allocation of a large-scale feed-in tariff and how our arrangements are consistent with the national electricity law. I would encourage any

member to go and have a look at the national electricity law and have some regard to the complexity of the issues the government is seeking to address.

Turning to the issue of waste, the government has released its draft waste strategy for public comment. It is looking at ways to further improve the rates of resource recovery in the territory, building on the very strong base and the leadership position that the territory has nationally. The strategy looks at the connections between collection, transport, sorting, processing and the markets available for resource recovery to build on existing resource recovery rates.

The draft strategy, if adopted, will set the pathway to ensuring that less than 10 per cent of waste ends up in landfill by significantly increasing recycling and also, for the first time, looking at opportunities for the generation of energy from suitable residual wastes which are not suitable for other more economically attractive recycling options. This policy will take the ACT well beyond the 70 per cent resource recovery rate reached under the no waste by 2010 strategy.

The strategy emphasises the waste management hierarchy that encourages people to reduce the amount of waste they generate; reuse goods, such as clothing and furniture; recycle waste material, such as paper and glass; recover resources, such as energy from wood and biosolids; and dispose of any remaining wastes safely to landfill.

To help inform the community and elicit feedback on the draft waste strategy, five community fora were conducted. There was an industry forum and an energy-from-waste forum was also held earlier this year. About 65 people attended the fora, while 29 submissions were received. That community feedback has been vital to the development of the final strategy.

Turning to the issue of transport, of course, the Greens like to have it both ways. They are very happy to criticise the government for failing to deliver on transport, but when there are good initiatives, such as the ones in this budget to build on our transport capacity, they like to take all the credit. It is a cute political strategy, but it does not really have regard to the very hard and detailed policy work that the government has to undertake.

The government continues its delivery of transport policies, infrastructure, programs and promotion to create a new vision for transport in the ACT—where bus services are closer to home and work, buses are more rapid and more frequent, and more Canberrans choose to leave their car at home. The Red Rapid service trialled in 2009, and adopted permanently into the bus network late last year, is an example of successful long-term planning in action. The Red Rapid is running every 15 minutes on weekdays from Gungahlin to the city, Russell, Barton, Kingston and Fyshwick through a key transport corridor.

Yesterday the government announced a trial extension of the Blue Rapid to Kippax via Southern Cross Drive. The new Kippax extension will be supported by an expansion or relocation of the existing Kippax park and ride to provide better transport options for people living in the west Belconnen area. Of course, the government has invested over \$120 million to date in transport for Canberra projects,

studies and improvements in service delivery in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 budgets—\$120 million, Mr Assistant Speaker. That demonstrates the government’s commitment on this issue.

The initiatives I have just outlined reflect the government’s commitment to providing leadership in sustainability and, contrary to the claims by Mr Rattenbury, demonstrate the government has and will continue to deliver on our sustainability commitments. But we will not resile from recognising and placing on the record that policy development is hard, complex and sometimes takes a bit longer than you originally anticipated. So be it. I would rather the policy is right. I would rather the policy is well informed. I would rather the policy is going to work than try to meet some arbitrary time frame. I have circulated amendments to Mr Rattenbury’s motion that deals with these issues and I now seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

**MR CORBELL:** I move the amendments circulated in my name:

(1) Omit subparagraphs (1)(a) to (e), substitute:

- “(a) the Government has a comprehensive and continuing program to deliver on a range of key Government strategies, policies and legislative reforms to improve the sustainability of the ACT, including:
  - (i) *Weathering the Change* Action Plan 1;
  - (ii) the ACT *NoWaste 2010* Strategy; and
  - (iii) Sustainable Transport Plan;
- (b) these have resulted in a continuing and comprehensive suite of programs that are increasing the sustainability of the ACT;
- (c) the Government is progressing onto the next stages needed to establish a more sustainable city, including:
  - (i) *Weathering the Change* Action Plan 2;
  - (ii) Sustainable Energy Policy;
  - (iii) ACT Sustainable Waste Strategy; and
  - (iv) Transport for Canberra;
- (d) the Government has engaged the community on each significant area of sustainability policy through invitations for submissions, public meetings and information sessions and uses these to inform final policies; and
- (e) the Government continues community engagement and consultation at each stage of policy implementation; and”.

(2) Omit subparagraphs (2)(a) and (b), substitute:

“(a) continue its programs for a sustainable Canberra and its processes for ensuring community consultation.”.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (4.27): I am speaking to Mr Corbell’s amendments to Mr Rattenbury’s motion and I foreshadow that, should Mr Corbell’s amendments fail, I will move an amendment of my own. It is an extremely interesting motion. At first I did not know whether to be amused or disappointed. By moving this motion, what the Greens are admitting is that they are not the balance of power and they are not third-party insurance, because they have not been able to achieve all the splendid things that they said they were going to achieve on behalf of those that voted for them. I guess, like all third-party insurance, it pays to read the fine print of the policy: “We’ll talk, we’ll be in agreement with the government, we’ll be in coalition with the government, but we certainly won’t act.”

Mr Rattenbury mentioned a mounting sense of unease. I think the public have a mounting sense of unease about the damp squib that the ACT Liberals have turned out to be—sorry, there’s a Freudian slip—the damp squib that the ACT Greens have turned out to be. What I was going to say was that the Greens, when they spoke to the Liberal Party—and I will give you one example.

**Mr Corbell:** That has got to be the raw prawn award for the year.

**MR SMYTH:** I will give you one example. I was concentrating on the example I was going to give. We talked about what would happen to Spark Solar. Spark Solar wants to be an ACT firm. It wants to manufacture solar cells here. The Greens, when we were negotiating with them about forming government, said, “What would you do to help Spark Solar?” We said we would work towards helping Spark Solar. I assume they put the same question to the government. But here we are two and a bit years later, and nothing has happened for Spark Solar. That is why the Greens are the damp squibs in this place, because you can claim to be the balance of power, you can claim to be third-party insurance, but if you do not use it then you really are a damp squib. And in the case of a firm like Spark Solar, my understanding is that nothing has happened.

So I just wonder, in the context of this motion, what it is that the Greens have actually been doing. And it really is quite an amazing motion. The Greens are trying to use the devices of the Assembly to get the government to do something. The Greens and the Labor Party have got an agreement and, surely within that agreement, these things have been agreed to or there is a mechanism to make things happen.

I think Mr Corbell let the cat out of the bag when he said, “You have been sidelined.” There you go. “Carping from the sidelines” was the quote. “You are carping from the sidelines.” The government does not acknowledge the role of the Greens in their agreement. They do not believe the Greens offer anything. They are in agreement with them because it gives them government. We all understand that. But according to Mr Corbell, all they do is carp from the sidelines.

That is a very bizarre attitude from the Greens-Labor alliance partner. And I think the problem for the Greens is that people—

**Mr Hanson:** Meredith is in the team, though.

**MR SMYTH:** That is an interesting statement. Mr Hanson says, “Meredith is in the team.” Yes, indeed. During the budget breakfast this morning, Ms Hunter thought things were okay, there was a green tinge to the budget, things were happening. But if you read Mr Rattenbury’s motion then clearly not enough is happening and it is not happening fast enough.

If you go to this motion and the fact that the Greens have to be here today then the Greens have failed. The Greens in fact are not calling on the support, obviously, of the Labor Party, because they do not believe the Labor Party is doing it. So what they are asking for is the Liberal Party’s support to bring the government to account. So who is the third-party insurance now? Who is the balance of power now? The Greens cannot achieve this without one or two of the other parties in this place. I think we need to be serious about what happens in real life in a democracy. People form alliances, and alliances dissolve when you want to achieve something.

I want to go back to a motion I moved last year, and here is the real politics for the Greens. Last year, I moved a motion on the Loxton report that called on the government to deliver some strategies by the first sitting week this year. Mr Rattenbury, in his wisdom, watered it down. And what we got, because the Greens watered it down, was a contemptuous document of the tourism industry, a document that was contemptuous of this Assembly, because the Greens did not work with the Liberal Party to hold the government to account.

That is the problem when you take the approach that the Greens take. The government brushes you aside and, as Mr Corbell so clearly said, “There you are, carping from the sidelines.” That is all they said. They do not see you as a player. You are just on the sidelines and all you do is carp. We had the patronising lines from Mr Corbell. He is good at doing that to cover up his own failures and his own failings.

The problem for all of the people of the ACT is that the Chief Minister did not find climate change until about March 2008, before an election, when it was topical. Remember, back then it was the greatest moral dilemma facing the human race. Apparently, it is not anymore but, in 2008, that was convenient. And the Chief Minister, after seven years in power, when he had forgotten about no waste by 2010, when he had abandoned our greenhouse gas strategy and had not put his own in place for almost seven years, suddenly found religion. He got religion. He understood. He read the opinion polls. And that was all it was.

So the problem is: what do we make of today and what do we actually make of this motion? I think this motion is an admission, first and foremost, that there is some dissent in the Greens’ ranks. Ms Hunter was telling the business community this morning everything is okay in the relationship with the government, there is a tinge of green in things, that things are going okay. And we have got Mr Rattenbury today

moving a motion that the Assembly notes that the government has not delivered a number of key government strategies, policies and legislative reforms to improve sustainability in the ACT in a timely manner. The government has not delivered.

You know what? For the first time, Mr Rattenbury says something I think I can agree with. The government have not delivered. It is quite true. But then again, on environmental issues, they have not delivered for nine years. They talk the talk but they never walk the walk, and that is the problem.

The best case of that is the no waste by 2010 strategy. As Mr Rattenbury rightly points out, that expired last year. It is interesting that in this year's budget, if you go to page 194 of BP3, we have now got \$2.7 million to find a new ACT landfill site and for other studies. So not only do they not believe in the no waste strategy, their understanding of it is that it requires new landfills.

The objective back in 1996, following the public consultation and the release of that policy, was to genuinely and aggressively go about reducing the need for anything to go to landfill. And that is something the public told us in consultation. Our hope was it would develop new sustainable industries, industries that would come along, that would help us reduce waste, or new industries like Spark Solar who actually wanted to manufacture sustainability products in the ACT. But neither of those things has happened here in the ACT. Why? Because we have got a government that talk about it but do not do it and we have got a Greens party that does not hold them to account.

I think that what Mr Rattenbury calls for in paragraph (2) is not unreasonable. It is not unreasonable to ask the government to "table in the Assembly, by the first sitting day in June 2011, time lines for the public consultation, finalisation, and public release of these strategies, policies and legislative reforms listed in paragraph 1(a)". It is not unreasonable. That is the government's policy. It is not unreasonable that the government would tell us when they are going to do consultation and then release documents. Because of the age of some of these documents, it is not unreasonable that we actually have a guide to what the government are doing.

But again, it is the weak approach, the limp lettuce approach, where you call on the government to do something. Given Mr Corbell's amendments will go down unless the Greens vote for them over their own, I will then move an amendment that deletes "calls on" and actually substitutes the word "directs". This is the place that holds the executive to account. If you want to act—and you do not want to—at least act like you want to be third-party insurance. We have the right to direct the government to do something. Then if the government does not want to do that, we have the right to take it further. We should have the right to take it further. And we will have the right to take it further if the government does not do as it should.

The second paragraph, paragraph (b), then calls on the government to actually complete the strategies, policies and legislative reforms within the timetables that will be outlined.

We have an alliance that maintains this government in office, the Greens-Labor alliance. I assume the Greens went there because they thought they would get a better

deal or a better opportunity to deliver their policies. But we know now from Mr Corbell that he at least thinks they are a joke, that they belong on the sideline, like some sort of observer or spectator. That is the government's official position on the ACT Greens: "You are the sideline. You are not in this game. We don't accept that you are the balance of power." Clearly, they do not accept that you are third-party insurance. And I suspect a lot of people in the community now see the Greens as "Lite Greens", as I think Mr Stanhope called them. I think it is probably more "pale green", because they talk a lot about what it is that they would achieve but they do not seem to have the leadership or direction to deliver it.

Today might just be a lovers' spat. This is a bit of public posturing and a bit of a lovers' tiff, a bit of posturing. "We need to tell our people we're doing this stuff, that we just don't bake cakes when we take credit for other people's work, that we actually do stand for something, that we are substantive." Or it is an admission of failure.

The Greens can tell us which one it is but, if they truly want to hold the government to account, they will actually vote for my amendment to direct the government to do this. We will back them on that. And then we will see what the government do. We know how the government deal with these matters. They treat us with contempt when we try to hold them to account. That is the executive. But they do so because, in the last 2½ years, the Greens party have let them get away with it. There used to be three levels—grave concern, censure or no confidence in ministers. We have slaps over the wrist. We now have counselling. We have all these sorts of things, except for standing up to the government. And the reality is that, when you will not stand up for what you believe in, if you know it to be wrong, it is quite clear that you stand for nothing.

Mr Rattenbury, for the first time in probably 2½ years, is trying to stand up for something. Good luck to him. The interesting question will be how the government will treat them. The problem for the people of the ACT, though, is that promises have been made and they will be watching very carefully whether promises will be kept. And in the 77-odd weeks left to the election, it will be interesting to see how the relationship between the two parties opposite goes.

Mr Assistant Speaker, you have been around long enough and you would remember the campaign your party ran against the independents, including the Greens, in 2001. The Labor Party do not share. Play fair, they want to be the majority party. That is how they like it. They will take your agreement, they will take your votes, but what they will then do, as Mr Corbell has so eloquently said, is relegate you to the sideline.

Here is the chance for the Greens to see whether or not they accept that relegation. And here is the chance for any other member of the government to come down—and perhaps the Chief Minister would like to come down—and say, "Mr Corbell is wrong." It would be interesting to see that, given some of the pronouncements and the communiques that have come after the quarterly meetings that they have. After the last one, in February this year, Mr Stanhope said, "Look, there is a good understanding between the Labor Party and the Greens in relation to this agreement." If there is a good understanding between the Labor Party and the Greens in relation to the agreement, it is interesting that we have got this motion today. It is very interesting that Mr Rattenbury, at least, felt the need to attempt to at least be looking

like he was standing up for something. But I suspect that the reality is that the government will treat this motion like they treat so many other motions, with contempt, because that is the way the Labor Party is with the Greens.

So the question is—and I put this question to Mr Rattenbury: the Assembly was treated with contempt over the Loxton review. What would he like to do about it? We have yet to find out from Mr Rattenbury what he would like to do about it. It will be interesting to see, come the first sitting day in June 2011, how the government will react and how Mr Rattenbury will react then if the government has not complied with his motion.

This motion signifies abject failure on behalf of the ACT Greens that they cannot achieve what they want with their Labor colleagues. It is an admission of failure. In fact, in many ways, it is a signed confession that they have not been able to implement their policies. They might get to eat cake and they might amuse themselves in their offices, eating cake each time there is some sort of policy triumph. When Marie Antoinette said, “Let them eat cake,” she was being dismissive. When they say, “We get a cake—(*Time expired.*)

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Molonglo) (4.43): I rise today to support my colleague Mr Rattenbury’s motion. This is an excellent motion. As I have said many times in the past, the reason I stood for the Assembly in 2008, and unexpectedly was elected, was that I care passionately about climate change and sustainability for all human beings—in fact, all species of the world. I believe that we really need to act if we wish to have a sustainable future for people and other species.

It is really important to me, and to the Greens as a whole, that these policies are actually developed and delivered. I would also point out, though, as Mr Rattenbury did, that environmental sustainability is not the only thing that the Greens are concerned about. This is one of a set of things that the Greens are concerned about; it is not the only thing that the Greens are concerned about. We are, of course, concerned about social justice. We are concerned about grassroots democracy. We are concerned about non-violence. We are concerned about a lot of things.

But the five policies here encapsulate a lot of sustainability things which we think are important and where the government is simply not delivering its policies. They are all policies which, as Mr Rattenbury went through, are significantly overdue already. I remember doing our submissions on the energy policy. Weathering the change has been around for a while. We have some nice new copies of it. It would be really nice to see the updated version of it.

I will talk a bit more about the sustainable waste strategy because I am the Greens’ waste spokesperson. As Mr Rattenbury noted, and as I am sure all of us in the Assembly could note, the strategy is well and truly overdue. We once had a strategy called “no waste by 2010”. It is now 2011. The name says it all. We do not have a strategy. In the absence of a strategy we are not going in the right direction. Once upon a time the ACT had the best resource recovery rate. It was up to about 75 per cent. I notice that Mr Corbell has carefully adjusted his rhetoric—instead of having the highest, we now have one of the highest—because we do not have the

highest anymore. We have dropped to 69 per cent. Our target next year is even worse, at 68 per cent. We are expecting in our budget targets this year to have a higher amount of waste per person than we have had in the past. This is not going in the right direction. This is not showing that we have a strategy. We are showing that we do not have a strategy.

The budget paper shows, I suppose, what our default strategy is. Our default strategy appears to be that we are going to put \$7.25 million aside for studies on building new landfill. So we have gone back to the lowest common denominator waste strategy. This is very poor. It is appalling. We can do better than that. We should do better than that. We have done better than that in the past. There is no reason for us to drop backwards.

The Greens have attempted to put forward a waste strategy. Mr Smyth mentioned the parliamentary agreement. There were waste items in the parliamentary agreement. I guess I can say we are pleased that, in the absence of a strategy, the government have funded some of this in this last budget. They have funded a one-year trial for recycling bins, which is great. It shows the government understand the benefits of soil separation and have finally got around to doing this. But they have not delivered on the trial of a third bin for organic waste. There are a lot of things about soil separation that they have not delivered on. We put in a detailed submission to the waste strategy.

I cannot, of course, summarise it in the time that we have got, but basically I would say that the high level approach of the government seems to be going in the right direction. We support their putting in an ambitious resource recovery target of greater than 90 per cent, a streaming and cascading approach to waste, which seeks to achieve the highest and best use of resources. They looked at opportunities to manage biosolids more sustainably. We support all of these. Our issues are about the level below. What are we actually going to do? We are very concerned about organic waste. It is an area which I understand the Liberals are also concerned about.

We need to look very strongly at source separation of materials and recycling materials at their highest use. That seems to be an area where, in the absence of a detailed strategy, the government have dropped the ball. Their draft strategy has been looking at comingling strategies, a dirty MRF. We think that is going in the wrong direction. It is not going to the 90 per cent resource recovery target; it is going to a lowest common denominator target.

Another strategy that we desperately need, which my colleague Mr Rattenbury mentioned, is a sustainable transport action plan, or transport for Canberra plan. As the Greens' planning spokesperson, transport is something which is of considerable interest to me. A lot of planning is about where the transport corridors go and how the transport works. Canberra will not work unless the transport works. We have just been debating transport for Gungahlin. Transport and planning are intimately connected. We have got to get the transport right; we have got to get the planning right. We do not appear to have any transport strategy.

Mr Corbell's statement that the government is investing in transport is abundantly true. The government is spending a lot of money on transport. But the Greens would

contend that not all the money being spent on transport is being spent in the right direction. The absence of a strategy makes it really hard to work out if it is going in the right direction. What seems to be a structural separation between the road building part of the government and the public transport part of the government makes it, without a strategy, even harder for the government to achieve any sort of rational program—I hesitate to use the word “strategy”—for transport delivery.

Some of the things the government is investing in we are positive about. As Mr Corbell says, we do like to say positive things about some of the things. The cycleways and the footpaths were part of the agreement. The government is putting additional money into buses. We are very happy to support that. We are happy to support the Belconnen Way where they have put in the bus priority lane. Some of the things that the government is doing are in the right direction, but a lot of them are not. The government is putting more of the ACT’s scarce resources into private cars—road-based transport.

I feel that the government ought to seriously do a transport strategy and look at the long-term impacts, particularly of peak oil. I know I harp on about peak oil a lot, but this is because it is a real problem. It is not going to go away. It is only going to get worse. Australia has been shielded from the impacts of increasing oil prices in the last six months as our dollar has gone up to \$1.10 compared with the US dollar. But it is not going to keep on like this. The high oil prices are going to hit the Australian community. It is going to become abundantly obvious that we need to have a transport strategy and not just go out and build more roads.

In summary, I very much commend Mr Rattenbury for his motion. We need to get these strategies out and we need to start moving in the right direction rather than it being business as usual or some sort of random, uncoordinated direction—whatever someone felt was a good idea at the time. I commend Mr Rattenbury very much for this motion.

Question put:

That **Mr Corbell’s** amendments be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Noes 9

Mr Barr	Mr Stanhope	Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur
Ms Burch		Mr Coe	Mr Rattenbury
Mr Corbell		Mr Doszpot	Mr Seselja
Mr Hargreaves		Mr Hanson	Mr Smyth
Ms Porter		Ms Hunter	

Question so resolved in the negative.

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (4.56), by leave: I move the amendment circulated in my name:

In paragraph (2), omit “calls on”, substitute “directs”.

Based on my experience of the way the government take these motions in this place—and it is quite clear from the Loxton motion that we ran last year—they just let them go over their heads and do not give them the due regard that they should. I think that if we are to get this information on the first sitting day in June 2011 it is important for this place to direct the government to table that information. It is important information. These are time lines about what government are doing about their policies. They should have this information now. It should be in their work program. It should not be hard to distil that information and put it into a document, as Mr Rattenbury outlines in paragraph (2)(a) of his motion. Paragraph (2)(b) then calls on the government to simply conform to the time lines that they are setting for themselves.

That cannot be particularly hard. But I have been here a little while and I have seen how they act. Mr Stanhope is here. Perhaps Mr Stanhope will tell us whether or not he believes the Greens are carping from the sidelines, as Mr Corbell pointed out to the Assembly earlier in this debate. It is a simple amendment. It just deletes the words “calls on” and substitutes the word “directs”. 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) (4.58): The government will not accept and will not agree to Mr Smyth’s amendment. As a matter of principle, the government will not accept that matters that are within the prerogative of the executive, which is to determine the time frame and the timing of policy matters, should be subject to any sort of direction on the part of the Assembly. It would be akin to the executive trying to direct the Assembly as to how it conducts its business.

**Mr Smyth:** The Assembly directs its own business, and you know it.

**MR CORBELL:** Indeed; the Assembly does direct its own business, but so does the executive, Madam Deputy Speaker—so does the executive. The executive will determine its times frames and its points at which it determines and announces its policy measures. It will be held accountable for that. To suggest that the Assembly should direct the government in this regard is not acceptable to the government, and we will not be supporting it.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (5.00): I actually was not going to speak to this. We were just going to vote in support of Mr Smyth’s amendment, but in light of Mr Corbell’s comments it does seem necessary to make a comment, just simply to clarify that I think Mr Corbell has to some extent got the wrong end of the stick. We are not directing the government as to what the time line should be; we are simply asking them to make it clear to the Assembly exactly what the time lines are.

**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) (5.00): I rise simply to support the comment that Mr Corbell made in relation to this. There is an unaccepted division between the executive and the legislature. One of the areas in which that division blurs, and blurs dangerously, is for the legislature to seek through motions in this place to direct a member of the executive in the performance of his or her duties or responsibilities.

This is the fundamental principle around the separation of powers and the separation of responsibilities between the legislature and the executive. In all my time in this place whenever members of this place have moved motions seeking to direct a member of the executive there has followed a debate and a conversation and an assertion by respective members of the executive, whether it be Labor or Liberal—and I remember this debate and this conversation at times when the Liberal Party were in government—around the importance of recognising and respecting the separation of powers.

As to the roles and responsibilities of ministers, the members of the executive, vis-a-vis the legislature, this is an extremely important principle. This is a dangerous precedent for it simply to be acknowledged: “Oh well, we can direct if we feel fit. We’re the legislature. We’re all powerful. We will interfere. We will tell the executive how it is to do its business. We will tell a minister how he is to perform his duties. We are the legislature.” There is a strict division of responsibility, long acknowledged and acknowledged and respected for good reason. This amendment should not be supported.

Question put:

That **Mr Smyth’s** amendment be agreed to.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Ayes 9

Noes 6

Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Barr	Mr Stanhope
Mr Coe	Mr Rattenbury	Ms Burch	
Mr Doszpot	Mr Seselja	Mr Corbell	
Mr Hanson	Mr Smyth	Mr Hargreaves	
Ms Hunter		Ms Porter	

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (5.06): The subject of this motion today relates to some extremely important strategies for the future of the ACT. We have been talking about the sustainable energy policy, the weathering the change action plan 2, the sustainable waste strategy, the sustainable transport action plan and the Nature Conservation Act. These are all very important areas of policy development for future sustainability and frankly for the future of this city. As I said right at the start, the Greens are increasingly concerned about the delays that these strategies have faced.

In addressing some of the comments Mr Corbell made, we were never suggesting that the government were not doing anything on these policies—quite the contrary. But they have been doing it without a strategic framework in these areas. That is of concern because they are, and I agree with Mr Corbell on this, complex, challenging and difficult areas. That is why we need to ensure that we have a good strategic framework for each of them.

My view is that the government has had in each of these cases significant time and space to deal with them and yet has not dealt with them in a timely manner. It is not like it was not clear that some of these were coming. If we go back to the waste strategy, it was always clear that it was going to expire in 2010, or in fact at the end of 2009. Given that the government has been in office since 2001, one might have anticipated putting that in the work plan somewhere down the line to ensure that there was a new strategy in place by the time the old one expired.

We then turn to the energy policy. Of course, that was started in 2006. It is now 2011. If that had been done in a timely manner we should probably already be on the first revision of it. Again, I acknowledge that this is a complex and fast-moving area, but that is not an excuse for operating without a clear strategic framework or a clear strategic vision because something like an energy policy should be addressing important questions. What percentage of our energy do we want to get from renewables? How much do we want to generate from inside the ACT? How much do we want to purchase from across the border? Where do we need to get the power from? For all of these sorts of questions we should have some clear strategic framework to help guide us through then, I suppose, the sub-decisions that fall out of that.

Mr Corbell said, “We need to get these policies right.” Again, I agree with him. But we also actually need to get them done. I think it is important that we do have a commitment to getting some of these policies done in a timely manner. That may mean that we then need to review them, because the world does change. But if we work on the basis that the world keeps changing, then we will need to actually set the framework or we will just keep floating along with the tide rather than setting a clear direction of where we want to go.

I particularly find it interesting in terms of the energy policy where public submissions did close well over 12 months ago. I was interested in Mr Corbell’s comment today that the submissions were broadly supportive. On that basis I find it interesting, and perhaps this is a discussion we can have in another context, why then there is such delay in finalising it. If the submissions are broadly supportive, where is the blockage? Is it in cabinet? Is that the problem? I do not know. It is an interesting question, but what it points to is that the underlying issue for each of these strategies is that we need to move forward, we need to get them done, we need to do a good job, but we need to get them done.

I was also interested in Mr Corbell’s observation that the government announced their zero net emissions goal in May 2009. We are now two years down the track from that. The weathering the change action plan is not in place. The sustainable energy policy

is not in place. The waste strategy is not in place, which of course is important for achieving a zero net emissions goal. We are two years down the track from announcing the goal. The sustainable transport action plan is not in place. All of these strategies feed back to achieving that goal and yet we do not have a clarity.

Given that they are all in the air at once, clearly a whole-of-government response is needed to ensure that we move forward on some of these important strategies. I was pleased that Mr Corbell brought up the Climate Change Council, which I did not mention, although I did mention it in a press release earlier in the week. But that is one of those ones where I think the community get frustrated because they were required to make their nominations to the council in a three-week rush job before Christmas. You think, "Terrific, the government is keen to get on with it." Fair enough; people will get on with their submissions if they know that there is work to be done and stuff to get on with.

I think there is real enthusiasm in the community for something like the Climate Change Council. I think it is a good initiative and people were probably happy to put in their nominations on the basis that the government clearly wanted to get on with it. But it is now May. It is a nine-member council—up to nine members. Mr Corbell said that we need to consult across the whole of government. This is worse than public service recruitment. We know how frustrating people find that.

Of course, I could not pass up on making some response to Mr Smyth's observations.

**Mr Smyth:** I was relying on it.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes, I thought you might be. Mr Smyth sort of started off on the substance of the matter but then warmed himself up into his usual themes. I think in those comments Mr Smyth demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of a three-party parliament and also the nature of the parliamentary agreement. Yes, it is true that we gave support to the Labor Party to form government. The agreement also notes that it is quite clear we will disagree with the government at times on matters of policy and matters of parliamentary business. We are relaxed about that.

I think it points to a sophistication that the opposition bench has struggled to comprehend at times. It is quite possible in a three-party parliament—I think it is quite exciting; I think it has the potential to be quite dynamic—for different groupings to work together at different times. That is something we are certainly open to. We are relaxed about that. I think that it actually offers opportunity. So the fact that we want to come in here and hold the government publicly to account on these important matters I think speaks to a level of sophistication. That agreement says that we do not have to take the government's side on every matter. It is only Mr Smyth and his colleagues that refer to it as a coalition. We are quite clear that we have a power-sharing arrangement. That does not make it a coalition that does not question important matters as they arise and as they need to be debated. I think there is a maturity in that, that some of us in this chamber still have some learning to do on.

I thank Mr Smyth for his support for at least the substance of the motion, perhaps not for his free lecture on how a three-party parliament works. But I think it is important

that we put this through today. I look forward to seeing the government's response in June because we do need to get some answers on what is happening on these strategies. We need to see some clear time frames. We need to see some commitments to getting it done.

If that means that the government needs to focus some resources towards that, so be it, because they are important matters for the future of this territory. They are important matters to get sorted out. We need clear, strategic directions and I look forward to having a sense of what the government's time lines are going to be on that and then being able to hold them to account on meeting some of those time lines, which unfortunately so far have far too often have slipped.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Water—secondary uses**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo) (5.14): I seek leave to move the motion on the notice paper appearing under Mrs Dunne's name relating to a proposed inquiry into secondary water uses in the ACT.

Leave granted.

**MR HANSON:** I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the progress being made towards completion of the major water security projects;
- (b) the potential impact on the availability of water for use in the ACT under the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan;
- (c) the advances being made in the technology being offered commercially for the management, treatment and reuse of grey water in both commercial and domestic applications; and
- (d) the ACT Government's continuing development of urban waterways;

(2) calls on the Executive to commission the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC) to undertake an inquiry into and assessment of secondary water uses in the ACT, including, but not limited to:

- (a) opportunities for a commercial market in grey water in both commercial and domestic applications and in new construction and retro-fits; and
- (b) the Government's urban waterways and stormwater harvesting programs and their associated built wetlands;

(3) without limiting the scope of the inquiry, calls on the inquiry to include consideration of the following matters:

- (a) the net economic benefit of paragraphs (2)(a) and (b), with and without:
    - (i) the impact of the major water security projects; and
    - (ii) the potential impact of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan; drawing conclusions in relation thereto;
  - (b) the economic, environmental and social impact of paragraphs (2)(a) and (b) on the community generally; and
  - (c) the options and alternatives available for the Government to consider in terms of water conservation initiatives that have the potential to deliver better and more viable economic, environmental and social outcomes; and
- (4) calls on the Executive to table the ICRC's final report on its inquiry by the last sitting day in 2011.

As members are aware, Mrs Dunne unfortunately cannot be here due to an illness of one of her children. She would obviously want to be here to discuss this important motion. Whether you agree with Mrs Dunne on these issues or not, there is no questioning her passion for these issues of water security for the ACT and there is no question that the government has had a piecemeal approach to secondary water uses in this city that has not been well considered.

We have heard about the programs for builders to drive to the lower Molonglo water treatment plant to collect non-potable water and drive it back for use on their building sites. We have heard about the government handing out free greywater hoses so that residents can divert untreated water from their washing machines to their gardens. We have seen the burgeoning number of urban waterway and stormwater capture projects. We have seen a range of water security measures being put in place. But where is the analysis for these measures? What impact do they have economically, socially and environmentally?

The motion I am proposing today on behalf of my colleague Mrs Dunne is designed to let us have a comprehensive and considered look at these matters. The genesis of this motion was quite some time ago when Mrs Dunne engaged in some informal discussions with the senior commissioner of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission. In that discussion Mrs Dunne canvassed with the commissioner the possibility of the ICRC undertaking a cost-benefit analysis of the economic, social and environmental impact of the government's urban waterways program.

At the time, there was considerable public concern about the government's approach to the Lyneham wetland and the associated water capture and re-use project. There were concerns about a lack of public consultation and the money that was being spent and whether that investment was worth while economically. There were concerns about the change to the public amenity of the area, including the loss of a stand of trees to make way for the development. There were concerns about the economic viability of pumping water from the wetland to be used for the watering of nearby playing fields.

Of most concern was a public perception that any public consultation the government did undertake was nothing more than paying lip-service to local residents. They felt that the government was listening neither to their concerns nor to their suggestions about how the project might be improved. These concerns sounded warning bells for Mrs Dunne. She felt that similar issues might arise in relation to other urban waterway projects the government was engaged in or was planning. Indeed \$7 million is budgeted for the 2011-12 financial year, with a further \$500,000 budgeted for next year, to construct a stormwater reticulation network in the inner north.

Since that time, Mrs Dunne has engaged in discussion with people in the water industry who have something to say about greywater use in the territory. The outcome of these discussions suggested that the government again was not listening to the industry. Indeed the minister said as much in his answer to question on notice No 1233, published in *Hansard* on 9 December last year. The minister acknowledged that a number of commercial operators had been in discussion with his department and the Environment Protection Authority over a period of 12 months. Once again we saw a government paying lip-service, this time to the business community. The minister said in the answer to that question that the government had “an open mind to evaluating the introduction of the latest technologies and solutions”. But then the minister immediately qualified that open-mindedness by saying:

... it would be remiss of me not to highlight that historically, there are a number of problems associated with the promotion of grey water systems.

He then proceeded to make a long list of those problems. The minister's response suggests two things. Firstly, both the minister and the government are stuck in the past. They are fixated on the historical problems and they are stuck in the perception that those historical problems continue today. Secondly, the minister and the government, in fact, have a very closed mind as to today's, and indeed tomorrow's, technologies. The minister does not seem to understand that the use of untreated greywater, even in subsurface irrigation, let alone the government's greywater hose program or via buckets, is unhygienic and can lead to health issues.

The minister does not seem to understand that the health issues do not arise when treated and sanitised greywater is used. For example, reclaimed water from the Fyshwick treatment plant has been used on the Duntroon ovals for many years. The minister does not seem to understand that the current initiative to install separate greywater plumbing in new domestic premises to the edge of the slab does not make it cheaper to install domestic greywater treatment systems. The minister does not seem to understand that greywater systems are expensive because of a lack of appropriate regulation and the myriad approvals that are required. These conditions also encourage disreputable operators and discourage reputable companies who want to operate in a professional business environment.

The minister does not seem to have the nous to properly train plumbers in the installation of greywater systems. Worst of all, this government and its minister seem more intent on bandaid solutions than truly lasting sustainable solutions.

Another factor that was at play in all of this was the major water security projects. This government, through its territory-owned corporation Actew, is spending more than half a billion dollars to secure Canberra's water supply. There is the extension to the Cotter dam, which is costing \$363 million. There is the Murrumbidgee to Googong pipeline, which is costing \$150 million. There is the purchase of rights to water held in Tantangara reservoir—who knows how much that is, but I have heard figures in the order of \$45 million. And there is the Cotter to Googong transfer and its continuing cost to pump water uphill.

I will leave aside the questions of project management, budgeting and cost blow-outs because much has been said about that already. But because more needs to be said later I will for now also leave aside the question of how long these projects will provide water security. Suffice it to say at this point that the managing director of Actew Corporation said, on the one hand, that Canberra families would be paying an extra \$220 per year for these projects “forever”. On the other, he has said that the projects would provide Canberra with water security for 25 years. He further has stated that completion of the water security projects would herald the farewell to water restrictions for Canberra.

The next matter that exercised Mrs Dunne's mind was the release in October last year of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan. This matter was a pivotal factor in Mrs Dunne's resolve that an inquiry was needed. The government and the opposition are at one in terms of an assessment of the impact that the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan would, if implemented, have on Canberra's access to water without restriction.

The bottom line is that, were the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan to be implemented, Canberra would be facing permanent stage 3 or perhaps even stage 4 water restrictions. This is because the plan calls for a reduction of up to 45 per cent in diversion limits. This would put our maximum consumption allowance at about the levels that were used during the years of stage 3 water restrictions that we endured. It is a pity that the Greens cannot find themselves to be at one with the government and opposition on this issue. Their position, both here in the ACT and nationally, is that everything should be done to support the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan.

In truth, though, for the ACT the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan fails to allow for population, economic and social growth and it fails to take account of our excellent performance as the largest urban community in the basin, in terms of both reducing consumption and returning water to the river system for environmental flows. It fails to take account of the fact that the ACT, representing 17 per cent of the basin's population, diverts less than one per cent of the water that is available in the ACT. Indeed the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan leaves out any analysis of its impact on the ACT because it might skew the results for the rest of the basin. I do not know how the Greens can ignore such obvious flaws in the arguments proposed in the Murray-Darling Basin plan.

In addition, the proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan brings into question the economic, social and environmental viability of all water sources available to the

ACT. It impacts on the amount of potable water to which the people of the ACT will have access. It impacts on the amount of untreated water that will be available for capture and use for watering of ovals and playing fields. It impacts on the amount of water that golf clubs and rural properties can divert into dams. It even impacts on the amount of greywater that can be re-used, because ultimately that water is supposed to be treated and returned to the river system.

So, as I said earlier, this brings into question the viability in economic, social and environmental terms of the many strategies that are available to maximise the availability of water in all its forms in the ACT.

The Canberra Liberals believe that these matters need to be brought together and considered as a package. Hence Mrs Dunne wrote to the ICRC senior commissioner last November to request that he consider undertaking a suitable inquiry. The commissioner previously had expressed to Mrs Dunne some interest in pursuing the matter, but there were some hurdles in the way; hence Mrs Dunne's motion today that I have moved. On behalf of Mrs Dunne, I thank the commissioner for his interest in the subject and for his advice on the mechanics to get an inquiry underway.

The proposed Murray-Darling Basin plan, if implemented, will have a serious and profound impact on Canberra's water security, its supply and our access to it. It brings into question all of the initiatives that have been introduced or proposed to provide the people of Canberra with a secure water supply into the future. It brings into question the viability of those initiatives. We need to consider those questions, and the ICRC is well placed, indeed best placed, to do that. I commend Mrs Dunne's 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) (5.27): I would like to say at the outset that the government does not support this motion on the grounds that it is not only premature but also pre-empts the outcome of a number of other investigations that are already underway. Before I get into the details of why the government rejects the motion, let me take the opportunity to provide an update on the ACT's water supply situation and progress for the ACT's major water security projects.

The territory is currently, as members would be aware, in the fortunate position of having all of its water storages at 100 per cent capacity. This follows the second wettest summer on record, with Canberra airport recording 375 millimetres of rainfall, double the historical average of 169 millimetres. But, as members would know, there is no guarantee that our dams will always remain at this level. CSIRO future climate predictions suggest that we should, indeed, expect longer and more extreme periods of drought. Despite our full dams, there is still a need for the ACT to finalise its water security projects to ensure there is available sufficient water supply to meet the ACT's future water needs.

The territory is making good progress towards the completion of its three major projects, projects which I note the Liberal Party seem to doubt. The largest project involves increasing the capacity of the Cotter Dam from four to 78 gigalitres. The

Cotter Dam enlargement project is progressing well, despite delays due to the severe rainfall events over summer. The project is expected to be completed, based on advice from Actew, by March 2012, assuming no further weather delays.

Actew commenced initial construction of the Murrumbidgee to Googong water transfer project—known as the M2G project—in January this year. This project involves the transfer of up to 100 megalitres of water per day from the Murrumbidgee River through a pipeline to Burra Creek in NSW. It will allow Actew to draw water allocated to the ACT from the Murrumbidgee River and store it in the Googong Dam, the largest of our water storage reservoirs but the one with the most unreliable inflows and most vulnerable to drought. This project is expected to be completed in approximately 18 months.

The third ACT water security project is the Tantangara transfer. This project involves the trade and transfer of water allocated to Actew water licenses purchased in the New South Wales regulated Murrumbidgee River to the ACT via the Tantangara reservoir in the Snowy Mountains. This project will give the ACT access, if needed, to a source of water outside of the territory's immediate catchment.

Actew has completed the purchase of its water portfolio for this project. Actew is progressing the required commercial arrangements with Snowy Hydro for the release of water from Tantangara. The ACT government is working closely with the New South Wales government on the intergovernmental arrangements necessary to finalise these arrangements.

Returning to the specific proposal from Mrs Dunne, the government finds it difficult to understand why this inquiry is warranted at this point. Mrs Dunne makes reference in particular to a number of projects that she believes should be subject to analysis by the ICRC, and the government would like to argue that that sort of analysis is not warranted at this time.

Turning first to the Canberra integrated urban waterways project, this is a joint initiative of the ACT and commonwealth governments, aimed at delivering a range of environmental, recreational and improved amenity outcomes in addition to non-potable water supply opportunities. In return for \$10 million of commonwealth government funding, the ACT has agreed to substitute 1.5 gigalitres per year of potable water use by 2011 and three gigalitres per year by 2015.

The project displaces potable water use through investment in stormwater harvesting ponds and pipes and pumps to reticulate the water. It also makes use of underground aquifers for the storage of water. The stormwater is captured in ponds, pumped through pipes to storage tanks to irrigate high priority public sports grounds and other recreational and sporting facilities. Good progress has been made in the construction of various ponds in Mitchell, O'Connor, Dickson and Lyneham, and implementation of three pilot stormwater harvesting schemes for Weston Creek, the inner north, and Tuggeranong are underway. A two-year trial has been agreed, and the actual reticulation of the water commences once these projects are physically complete.

But these projects though are not yet fully physically complete, and I think it would be premature to undertake any detailed assessment of the effectiveness or viability of

these projects by the ICRC until these projects are physically complete. We should recognise though that, in working towards finalisation of the Canberra urban waterways project, it will be a requirement that the ICRC provide advice on the pricing of the water to be made available from these non-potable sources. So we have a process already where the ICRC is required to give advice on what the reasonable price should be for the supply of water from this source.

The second reason that this inquiry proposed by Mrs Dunne is not warranted at this time is that the government is already in the process of commencing its own review of the ACT's broad water strategy—think water, act water. This provides the broad framework to examine both supply through primary sources, through centralised network sources such as the reticulated water network and the water security projects that I mentioned earlier and secondary water use systems such as greywater systems and other demand reduction strategies as well.

The strategy is currently in the process of being reviewed for a revised water resource strategy for the territory. The review of think water, act water will examine the possible scope and opportunities for expanding secondary water systems in the territory in the context of the broader potable water supply and demand aspects. This vital piece of work will carefully examine the scope and use of non-potable water targets and applications for the territory.

It is acknowledged that the implementation of fit-for-purpose secondary water systems at scale can reduce the demand for potable water. The potential use of such systems clearly will be dependent on the application and costs of such systems, matters which are going to be explored through the review of think water, act water. It would be pre-emptive, in the government's view to ask the ICRC to undertake an investigation of secondary water use without the benefit of the findings of the review of think water, act water.

Let me turn now to the issue of the Murray-Darling Basin plan. Members will be aware that the implications on the territory of the proposals in the guide to the draft plan as released by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority late last year are of very serious consequence for the territory. But we now have a situation where there is a new chair of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Mr Craig Knowles, and an entirely new process for finalising what the draft plan will actually contain. The draft plan will also be informed by the work being done by the House of Representatives inquiry chaired by Mr Windsor, which the ACT has given evidence before. And indeed it will also be informed by the very considerable work that is now being undertaken at an officials' level and at the community's level by relevant Murray-Darling Basin ministers, of which the ACT has a representative.

The challenge in agreeing to the ICRC referral proposal Mrs Dunne has made is that it has to have regard to a plan—that is, the Murray-Darling Basin plan—which has not yet been made. Indeed, the content of that plan is far from certain. What we do know is that it will not be as proposed in the guide to the draft plan released by the authority late last year. We know that is the case because the current chair of the authority, Mr Knowles, has informed the public, communities and the relevant Murray-Darling Basin ministers that those proposals are not going to be advanced further. But we do not know in detail what the alternatives will be.

I think it would be an impossible task to ask the ICRC to have regard to the Murray-Darling Basin plan and its implications for the territory in the context of secondary water use in this referral. I just do not understand how you have an inquiry that has regard to a plan that has not yet been made, the details of which have not yet been made public. I just do not know how you have an effective inquiry in those circumstances. To me, that is one of the most flawed aspects of this proposed referral. I ask other members, particularly the Greens, to have regard to the fact that if you support this, you are going to be supporting an inquiry which has to have regard to a plan the details of which details have not been made public and which are unknown. That is the referral to the Murray-Darling Basin provisions.

I think that is a real problem. I think it is an insurmountable problem, and I think it highlights again why this referral is premature. It is premature because we do not know what is in the Murray-Darling Basin plan. We will not know until later this year what the draft plan says. It is premature because we have not yet completed and got findings from the review of think water, act water, which is the key water policy document for the territory. It is premature because we have not completed the largest of the secondary water use infrastructure projects in the territory—the Canberra urban water waste projects—nor do we have a pricing decision from the ICRC in relation to what the economic costs of that water will be for end users. In all of these areas, we have unknowns. And yet in those circumstances, you want to go and embark on a whole-scale look at secondary water use without, I would argue, the key inputs needed to actually have a meaningful inquiry.

For those reasons, the government will not be supporting this referral today. Water security and development of alternative water uses is a legitimate policy issue and an important policy issue that the government believes needs and is attending to. But to ask the ICRC to undertake this work at this time fails to acknowledge where we are at in terms of some of the key inputs that the ICRC would have regard to and fails to recognise that it would be premature and very difficult for the ICRC to give us a very meaningful analysis on these issues, given the uncertainties around those issues that I have highlighted. As I said, the government will not be supporting the amendment today, and I urge members to not lend their support to the motion moved by Mr Hanson.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (5.40): I thank Mrs Dunne and, on her behalf, Mr Hanson for bringing forward this motion today. I think it raises some very important issues. The Greens support the broad intent of what we believe Mrs Dunne is trying to achieve, although, having listened to the speech that was given, I probably have some slightly different perspectives on how we approach some of these issues.

At the heart of the motion is an analysis of water re-use in the ACT. We support an analysis of that because water, of course, is an incredibly valuable natural resource and re-use of it is important for social, economic and environmental reasons. Water re-use reflects the true value of water by seeking to get multiple uses out of it before returning it to the river.

A single-use system of water is wasteful. The cost alone of capturing, treating, storing and piping water to our homes makes it highly inefficient to only put that water to a

single use before seeing it washed down the drain. Environmental issues of water over-allocation of our rivers will be compounded by climate change and that makes re-use even more important.

The motion today calls on the government to commission the ICRC to undertake an assessment of two specific water re-use models: firstly, the greywater industry and, secondly, urban waterways. And then the ICRC would be asked to compare the relative benefits of each. At the heart of that, there would be a very useful piece of work for the ICRC to undertake, and the Greens do support that work taking place.

When it comes to greywater, we are concerned about the lack in the ACT of opportunities that we see attached to greywater. Certainly with the development of Molonglo, the Greens have particularly pursued this issue to ensure that our newer suburbs are as water efficient, as water conscious, as possible. And I think it would be fair to say that we have been frustrated by the lack of perhaps imagination, the lack of forward thinking, that we have confronted when it has come to the possibilities for greywater use in Molonglo.

Just recently I met with a local engineer and local businessmen who are investigating a household water re-use system. In fact, more than investigating, they actually built one in their own backyard. And it was an extraordinarily inspiring visit to this example of some local Canberra people doing something that really is globally cutting edge in terms of the environmental and economic opportunities that they were, I guess, imagining in the technology they have invented, which not only was recycling water but was also making use of the waste heat being generated by that process.

On the subject of urban waterways—and this is one of these areas where I think that perhaps we are coming from a rather different place than Mrs Dunne—the Greens see great opportunity in urban waterways. I note the comments Mr Hanson made, on Mrs Dunne's behalf, about the concerns over Lyneham wetlands. I guess we all have a different understanding of what we see taking place.

I went to some of the public consultations on the Lyneham wetlands as well and I received representations from the community. It would be fair to say that members of the local community did have a set of concerns. I think some of those concerns were very diverse and some of them were perhaps even contradictory. But I believe that many of the questions raised were answered. I think that issues around something like the Lyneham wetlands also demonstrate the notion that sometimes the community can be concerned about problems that are imagined but perhaps when a project actually gets underway many of those will be addressed.

Certainly the issue of removing a stand of pine trees is a different set of values. To remove a stand of pine trees to put in an outstanding native wetland that will attract biodiversity and provide a range of benefits—social, environmental and economic—is a point of there simply not being a lot of room for agreement. You either want the pine trees or you want the wetland.

But issues were raised around the water level changing. Certainly my understanding of these matters is that the water levels will change in a wetland. That is part of the

point about re-using that water. As that water goes up and down, over the course of 12 to 18 months, you will see plants take hold on those banks in response to those changing water levels. So the concern about having a smelly and muddy bank is not something that is actually the situation in the long run.

I think many of those concerns that were expressed were answered by the departmental staff at those public consultations. I think that residents will, in time, really appreciate those wetlands. Certainly the one on Banksia Street has been heavily embraced by the community and has been a real improvement to that part of Canberra. To some extent, they are side issues.

What this points to is that there is an opportunity for the ICRC—and this is the challenge to them in examining these issues—to undertake that economic analysis that incorporates social, economic and environmental costs and benefits. The ICRC should not simply, to use a colloquial phrase, take a hard-headed economics approach to it but should look at the full range of costs and benefits that arise from these sorts of projects. This is important because in the future we will have more greywater and more urban waterways and we need to get the best results from work of this kind.

When it comes to the minister's comments about this analysis being premature—and I listened very carefully to his comments and I thought carefully about them—I think we are at a point where a number of the wetlands are now in place. Certainly, for example, for the Flemington Road non-potable water reticulation system, we have got—and the minister's office has provided them to us—full costings around how the water from that will be charged and paid for. So I think that there is room for the ICRC to start to provide some analysis of and scenarios around these systems because there is an opportunity to make some understandings already.

There may be some limits to what conclusions the ICRC can draw at this point, but I guess that comes back to the earlier conversation around the development of strategies. You can always wait until the end point but I think there is an opportunity for the ICRC to provide some valuable information at this point in time that will provide us with some guidance at this point and perhaps can be added to at a later point in time.

That said, we do have some concerns with the motion and I foreshadow that I will be moving amendments shortly. I think it is important to set out exactly what the motion, if passed, will require the ICRC to assess. In its current form the motion requires a comparison to be made between the greywater industry and urban waterways in four different scenarios: firstly, with all the ACT's water security projects, such as the enlarged Cotter Dam; secondly, without the water security projects; thirdly, with the Murray-Darling reforms; and, fourthly, without the Murray-Darling reforms.

It spells out a little further that the inquiry would be required to determine what the situation in the ACT would have been like without the water security projects, assess the economic benefit of the greywater industry and compare it to urban waterways in such a situation. Essentially, the inquiry would be asked to imagine what the world would have been like if different decisions were made. That information may be of some academic interest or some historical interest but the Greens do not think it represents the best use of the time and resources of the ICRC.

The water security projects are going ahead. The approvals have either been put in place or have largely been granted and sods have been turned—in fact, in the case of the Cotter, a large amount of work has been done—or are close to being turned. To have the ICRC spend time and money mapping out what the greywater industry and urban water projects would have looked like if those decisions were not made does not offer any practical benefit to the Assembly or the community, in my view.

Put simply, those decisions will not be reversed. We are hardly going to tear down the bits of the enlarged Cotter Dam that have already been built. So we think there are some amendments that need to be made to the motion to make the most of the inquiry. The issue around the Murray-Darling is another one.

Before I speak to the amendments, I will move the amendments that have been circulated in my name.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Le Couteur): You need to seek leave. I understand you have more than one.

**MR RATTENBURY**: I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

**MR RATTENBURY**: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1)(b), substitute:

“(b) the potential impact on the availability of water for use in the ACT under the *Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan* and that the final impacts of the Plan in the ACT will not be definitively known until after the Basin Plan is finalised in accordance with the Water Act 2007 (Cwlth);”.

(2) Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

“(3) without limiting the scope of the inquiry, calls on the inquiry to include consideration of:

(a) the economic, environmental and social costs and benefits of (2)(a) and (b), with and without the Plan, to the extent it is possible to do so given (1)(b); and

(b) any water conservation initiatives other than (2)(a) and (b) that also have the potential to deliver economic, environmental and social outcomes; and”.

(3) Omit the word “2011” from paragraph (4), substitute “March 2012”.

As I was saying, there are some concerns we have about the original wording of the motion. I am seeking to address those in the amendments because we want to give the

best possible terms of reference to the ICRC; we sought to add value to Mrs Dunne's original motion in our amendments.

As I said, we do not agree with the historical aspects of the work that was proposed around the water security project and we have removed that reference. We also have concerns about the Murray-Darling reforms and asking the ICRC to make these assessments without the reforms in place. To that extent, I concur with the minister's observations to some degree. Because the reforms have not been finalised, the ICRC will face the possibility of the ground moving under their feet midway during the inquiry this year.

That said, it is also important to acknowledge that this process is taking place. In a similar vein to my earlier comments, I think it is possible for the ICRC to be mindful of the process that is happening in the external environment and frame its analysis in that context by examining some of the likely scenarios and making findings while being mindful of what those outcomes might be.

That is why we have sought to acknowledge in our amendments that the Murray-Darling reforms are taking place, but I think the ICRC is capable of giving consideration to specific areas we are asking it to with those issues in the back of its mind.

Finally, the motion gives the ICRC seven months to undertake the inquiry. Normally the ICRC works on a model where they issue a discussion paper and seek submissions. On that basis, we think that it is probably better to offer a longer time frame to enable that usual process that the ICRC engages in. Something closer to a 12-month time frame would mean that we get a better result in the end because it will enable the ICRC to go through those steps that it usually does. I think that that is a useful process. It is transparent, it gives the public an opportunity to engage in the discussion and for experts to contribute to the ICRC process. On that basis, we propose a report date of the end of March.

That is the nature of the amendments. As I say, I think that this is a good opportunity to look at these quite important issues. I think that perhaps there are some different bases for wanting to explore these issues. Nonetheless, I think it is valuable to all members of the Assembly to have access to this kind of information and the expertise that the ICRC can bring to bear on these matters. I commend Mrs Dunne for bringing the motion forward and I commend our amendments to the Assembly.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo) (5.52): The opposition will be supporting the amendments proposed by the Greens. I think that some discussion has occurred between Mr Rattenbury's office and Mrs Dunne's office with regard to the amendments. The purpose of them has been outlined by Mr Rattenbury. In some cases, I think that they are nugatory. Some of the additional words, particularly with clause (1)(b), are probably unnecessary, but I think with the full intent of referring these matters to the ICRC being met with these amendments, they certainly do not essentially affect the substance of what Mrs Dunne is trying to achieve. So we will be supporting the amendments.

**MR CORBELL:** (Molonglo—Attorney-General, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water, Minister for Energy and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (5.53): Again, Madam Assistant Speaker, the government does not agree with these amendments. It really is quite silly to be suggesting that there should be an inquiry that has to have regard to the impact of a plan, details of which are not known. Quite simply, it is silly to ask the ICRC to have regard, to the greatest extent possible, to the impact of a plan that has not been made public.

The fact is that none of it has been made public. We have no idea what the Murray-Darling Basin Authority is going to determine in its draft plan. All we do know is that what was in the guide to the draft plan is pretty much null and void. But apart from that, we do not know what the draft plan is going to say. We just do not know. Yet we have got this proposal here this evening that we are going to refer this matter to the ICRC and ask them to have regard to this issue.

How? How are the ICRC going to have regard to this issue? Are they going to try and divine what is in the mind of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority—use some sort of telepathic capacity that is vested in the extraordinary authority of the ICRC? It is just a silly proposition. I ask members to reconsider. It really is silly. We are pursuing this inquiry in a manner which is not only premature but in some respects is just pointless, absolutely pointless. It is illogical.

I turn to the other issues that Mr Rattenbury refers to. He talks about how the Canberra urban waterways projects are being completed. Yes, they are being completed. They are not yet operational. We do not know yet what sort of volumes are going to be delivered on the ground. We have got projections on those, we have got assessments on those and we have got some advice from the ICRC in relation to the range of prices the ICRC believes could be applied for the sale of water from those projects.

But none of that is completed. Yet we are now leaping into an inquiry that is, again, asking the commission to have regard to these issues. The fact is that we have got no practical experience on the ground to guide us in relation to those projects in terms of take-up, in terms of use, in terms of operationalisation of these important infrastructure projects.

Again, I simply say to members that this is premature. Whilst this referral can be made, it is going to be a pretty pointless exercise given the circumstances that we have got in front of us in relation to some clear determinants—the Murray-Darling Basin plan and the Canberra urban waterways project. Again, I refer to the fact that we have a process for review of think water, act water, which has commenced and which would provide valuable input.

I say to members that if they believe it is desirable to have the ICRC look at these matters, have the ICRC look at these matters once we have got an operational Canberra urban waterways project, once we know what is in the draft guide to the Murray-Darling Basin plan and once we know what the outcomes are of the review of think water, act water, which is required activity under the policy. That would be a more sensible approach. The government will not be supporting these amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Le Couteur): The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo) (5.57): Thank you, members, for your contributions. This has been an important matter brought before the Assembly. There have been some criticisms from the government and they do bear responding to. Mrs Dunne has had discussions with the ICRC about this issue and has been quite thoughtful in bringing this forward. Her view, and that of Mr Rattenbury and, I assume, the ICRC with whom she has had discussions as well, is that they do have sufficient information across the broad range of issues that need to be examined within this inquiry.

Although there are obviously matters that are ongoing, be it with wetlands or be it with the Murray-Darling Basin plan, there is sufficient information for the ICRC to conduct an inquiry that will be invaluable to the members of this Assembly, noting also that with the Greens' amendment, the reporting time for the inquiry is just under a year away, which will certainly provide the ICRC with sufficient time to examine all the issues available. As I said in my tabling speech, the March 2012—

**Mr Corbell:** 2011.

**MR HANSON:** No, the amendment has 2012. The government has adopted a piecemeal approach to water use in the city, and there is concern from numerous groups, including the Canberra Liberals and the Greens, that some of these aspects have not been well considered. This includes a number of the urban waterway and stormwater—

*At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.*

**MR HANSON:** We have seen a range of water security measures put in place by the government, but there has certainly been a lack of analysis of the measures, how they tie together and what the impacts of those measures will be economically, socially and environmentally. What Mrs Dunne has sought to achieve by bringing this motion to the Assembly with the intent of having an inquiry by the ICRC is to have a comprehensive and considered look at these issues and how they interplay together. There is no doubt that the ICRC is well positioned to conduct such an inquiry.

Madam Assistant Speaker, the government, through its Territory-owned Corporations Act, is spending more than half a billion dollars to secure Canberra's water supply. The projects have been well discussed in this place. So this is an issue not only of great importance environmentally but financially. But also, I think there can be few more important issues than that of Canberra's water supply. Having this examination of it is certainly appropriate.

Given the context of this occurring within the framework of the Murray-Darling Basin plan, which is to report, as I understand, later this year, it is an important issue as we

understand it, because the Murray-Darling Basin plan as it stands will have a significant impact on the ACT. That is acknowledged by the government, who have, as I understand it, raised quite a number of concerns about the impact of that plan, although it was Mrs Dunne that raised those issues in the first place.

So the issues that have been raised by me, by Mr Rattenbury and, indeed, by Mr Corbell about the Murray-Darling Basin plan with its stormwater secondary use and the wetlands needs to be brought together as a package so we can understand what is actually occurring with all those projects, how they are interplaying and get a comprehensive view of our water security here in the ACT.

I commend Mrs Dunne's motion to the Assembly. I congratulate her on the work that she has done and the passion that she has shown to get it to this point. I thank the Greens for their support. Now that the matter has been essentially agreed to, or is about to be agreed to, by the Assembly, I do ask that the government acknowledge that and make sure that they provide the necessary support required to initiate this important inquiry into Canberra's water system.

Question put:

That **Mr Hanson's** motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9		Noes 6	
Ms Bresnan	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Barr	Mr Stanhope
Mr Coe	Mr Rattenbury	Ms Burch	
Mr Doszpot	Mr Seselja	Mr Corbell	
Mr Hanson	Mr Smyth	Mr Hargreaves	
Ms Hunter		Ms Porter	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

## National Volunteer Week 2011

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (6.06): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) 9 to 15 May is National Volunteer Week 2011;
- (b) each day volunteers provide a vital service to the ACT community;
- (c) community organisations such as Volunteering ACT are important in promoting volunteering and supporting volunteers in the ACT;
- (d) according to the most recent available data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, approximately 94 000 Canberrans volunteer each year; and

- (e) all ACT public servants are entitled to three days paid community service leave per year; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) promote this existing community service leave entitlement to all staff within ACT Government agencies;
  - (b) support all ACT public servants to utilise their community service leave each year; and
  - (c) seek the support of the Assembly to have all Members of the Legislative Assembly lead by example and undertake at least three days of volunteering each year, auspiced by a community sector organisation.

Members will not be surprised to hear me say that I am pleased to bring this motion to the Assembly today on the importance of supporting and participating in volunteering. This is a timely motion, with National Volunteer Week occurring from 9 to 15 May 2011, being the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, the theme of which is “Inspiring the volunteer in you”.

The ACT government values the significant contribution of volunteers. Volunteers have an essential role in the wellbeing of our community and in many ways they embody the finest qualities of a healthy community. It is a matter of considerable note that Canberra has the highest rate of volunteering in Australia, with 38 per cent of the population involved.

There are a few statistics which are of interest. According to the 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics records, over 94,000 ACT residents volunteer over 10 hours of their time per week. The annual ACT average contribution of each male volunteer was 111.6 hours and each female 102.9 hours a year. I think you will agree that these figures are interesting in terms of the myth that volunteering is something that mainly women undertake.

Approximately 6,000 ACT residents each year volunteer for emergency and other community safety type activities and 11.2 per cent of Canberrans volunteer with sporting or other physical recreational organisations. As the Minister said in question time yesterday, 30,000 Canberrans volunteer in sport and recreation annually. 28.7 per cent of Canberrans volunteer with organisations that relate to community and welfare, education and training, health, parenting and young people, or religion, and 84 per cent of the organisations for which people volunteer are in the not-for-profit sector, with 14 per cent in the government sector. As of 30 June 2010 police volunteers had contributed 94,413 voluntary unpaid hours since the volunteers in policing program commenced in December 2001. Some 41.5 per cent of ACT women and 35.2 per cent of ACT men volunteer.

All age groups participate significantly in volunteering. However, in the ACT the highest representation for women is in the 35 to 44 years bracket and for men the 45 to 54 years bracket. The rate of volunteering has increased over the last 10 years.

Back in 1995 it was 31 per cent, in the year 2000 it was 36 per cent and it is gradually rising. Volunteers cite “helping others in the community”, at 57 per cent, “personal satisfaction”, at 44 per cent, and “to do something worth while”, at 36 per cent, as the reasons for volunteering. But what does this all mean? In short, Canberrans of all ages are very generous with their time and there is a strong desire in the community to help others and to make a significant difference.

We are as a government recognising this and we recognise the need to foster and promote the importance of volunteering. As we know, there is also recognition that the nature of volunteering is changing, which I have mentioned in this place on more than one occasion. There is increased population mobility and people have many demands on their time, resulting in the tendency for volunteering to occur in concentrated periods on an ad hoc basis aimed at particular projects instead of the traditional long-term regular commitment.

I would suggest that the latter will probably never occur again to the extent it did in the past, due to a number of factors, not just those I mentioned. One significant factor is the tendency for young people to be joining the volunteering ranks in greater numbers and that the bulk of volunteers are in the paid workforce. Research has shown that baby boomers as they retire are less likely to turn to volunteering in large numbers and, if they do, will commit, as I said, to one-off projects and periodic volunteering.

As I indicated earlier, 2011 is the 10-year anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers. To celebrate and recognise the role of volunteers, the ACT government is developing a set of principles, the volunteer statement, which will guide government’s understanding of volunteering in the ACT and represent a whole of government response to supporting and recognising volunteers.

The volunteer statement will emphasise and reinforce the value of volunteering to the achievement of the visions contained in the Canberra plan of a truly sustainable and creative city, an inclusive community that supports those that are vulnerable and enables all to reach their potential, the proud capital of the nation and a home of pre-eminent cultural institutions, and a place of natural beauty.

As we look to address the many challenges of the 21st century, for example climate change, volunteers will and do play an important part, for instance in protecting and restoring our environment and assisting the community to reduce its carbon footprint. Two great examples of what I am talking about are the SEE-Change organisation, which exists across Canberra now, working on the ground, carrying out and encouraging neighbours to carry out initiatives to improve this city’s sustainability, and one which I was fortunate enough to help celebrate over the weekend when I, along with Keith Ashurst of Cafe Brindabella, planted the 200,000th seedling in the lower Cotter on behalf of Greening Australia.

Greening Australia and 7,000 volunteers have worked together to reach this milestone over the past seven years. Of course it does not stop here and their effort will benefit from a partnership with the centenary of Canberra as they seek to reach another significant milestone by the 10th anniversary of the 2003 bushfires. Cafe Brindabella

have contributed to this effort by implementing a surcharge on takeaway coffee cups; a surcharge that customers are willing to outlay as they find it will increase the capacity of Greening Australia to plant more trees and shrubs to restore our environment.

The practical support provided by volunteers in emergencies can be life saving. Contributions to post-disaster rebuilding work provide an invaluable boost to community morale. We have seen this important contribution highlighted in the recent tragic events that occurred in Australia, New Zealand and Japan for instance. We of course saw this outpouring of community spirit and tremendous effort at the time following the 2003 firestorm in the ACT.

In addition to providing vital community services, volunteers and volunteer organisations are a key contributor to government-community consultations as they work closely with the community on a day-to-day basis.

The importance of voluntary work is being increasingly recognised by governments and communities alike. In Canberra the generous spirit involved in giving time and resources to neighbourhood and national scale projects fosters belonging, participation, ownership and cohesion within the diverse ACT community. It is not always recognised except by the volunteers themselves.

A number of ACT government agencies already have specific policies relating to volunteers and volunteer programs that they can be proud of. An ACT government volunteer statement would represent a whole of government approach to recognising volunteers, ensuring a consistent approach across government, and would support organisations working with volunteers by developing a framework of principles on which support for volunteering was based.

There is a range of ways in which volunteering is supported in the ACT. It is supported at an organisational level by organisations both within and outside the government. Many businesses have employee or corporate volunteer programs, recognising, as I said, that the majority of volunteers are in the paid workforce as well. These schemes, such as those supported by a number of large and small corporations alike, enable staff to take time off during the year to volunteer and also assist staff to source appropriate volunteer activity.

Volunteering is supported by legislation. When volunteers work with organisations in the ACT they are covered by the Work Safety Act 2008, which provides detail on health and safety in the workplace, and this recognises that volunteering is indeed important, unpaid work.

Volunteering is also supported by the ACT government. ACT government staff can apply for leave, both paid and unpaid, to participate in volunteering activity. This leave reflects what I just mentioned, that it is provided and supported by corporations and businesses in the ACT.

Volunteering not only contributes to the organisation or activity that a volunteer is involved in and is of huge benefit to the community; additionally and importantly it is

a significant benefit to the individual involved in the volunteer effort, improving their wellbeing, giving them opportunities and skills they may not otherwise access and building their networks and contacts within the community. And it is well known how much volunteering adds to our social capital.

However, the uptake of the three days paid leave by ACT public servants, which forms part of the ACT public service agreement, is not known to many and is not consistently taken up by public servants, which is why this motion calls on the government to more widely promote this entitlement.

I am sure this is something which all ministers and their departments and agencies—or directorates as they will soon be called—will embrace. It is also worth noting that the agreement also has a special provision for employees who volunteer for an emergency service such as the SES.

I also note that in this Assembly we too support volunteering through the Legislative Assembly members' staff collective agreement which says:

The parties recognise the community partnerships between the ACT public sector and volunteers, and the valuable contribution to the ACT community that volunteers make.

Accordingly, the Assembly will support employees who take part in volunteer activity where employees choose to do so. Of course choice is central to the activity of volunteering as the word “volunteer” actually comes from the Latin word which means “to will”; in other words “to choose”. As well as promoting these provisions within our public service, the ACT government also urges members of this Assembly to encourage their staff to become involved in some community work of their choosing. There is a wide variety of activities on offer and it is important for anyone volunteering to remember to choose an activity that they believe will suit their lifestyle and their motivations the best.

In closing, I call for this Assembly to show tripartisan support for the final part of this motion so that we can show leadership in giving our time selflessly to help others. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MR DOSZPOT** (Brindabella) (6.18): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion in support of National Volunteer Week, which will be celebrated in Australia this year from 9 to 15 May.

That great reference tool Wikipedia defines volunteering as “the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity, intended to promote good or improve human quality of life.”

I note that National Volunteer Week is the largest celebration of volunteers and volunteerism in Australia. It involves over five million Australians from every state and territory and every age group. Australia has around 700,000 not-for-profit organisations, 95 per cent of which rely largely on volunteers.

Volunteering Australia says that over 700 million hours are given each year in unpaid volunteer work and that 34 per cent of the adult population engage in voluntary activities. The statistics are impressive. Over 25 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds, and nearly 40 per cent of the 25 to 44 and the 45 to 54 age groups, volunteer their time. Nearly 25 per cent of people aged 65 and older also give of their time in one form of organisation or other, be it sports, education, community, welfare or church group. A significant 44 per cent of people aged between 35 and 44 volunteer—the highest participation rate of any age group.

But none of that really surprises me. I frankly do not know of anyone who does not do some form of volunteer work, whether it is fundraising, volunteering at the local school in the canteen or the classroom, assisting a local church or sporting group, acting as a community driver for the elderly to attend medical appointments or to take them shopping for essentials, planting trees, feeding the homeless or working at the RSPCA.

Indeed, how much junior sport would go ahead each and every weekend in Canberra if it were not for the mums and dads and big brothers and sisters acting as lines people, referees, coaches and team managers, offering to open up the grounds, serve in the canteen or wash the team uniforms after the game? My local football club, the Brindabella Blues, hold their presentation days at the end of each season. Due to their great numbers of junior players, they have to start at 8.30 am and generally finish around 5 pm. I take pride in spending my whole Saturday with them to present each player in each team with their trophies.

I know that I am not the only one in the Assembly that attends to these pleasant tasks a number of times each year and the example I give is the time spent with just one club and in just one sport. Multiply that across the hundreds of clubs across over 40 sporting associations and they are quite significant contributions that are made by all of us in this Assembly.

Without that much-needed free commitment, organisations such as the RSPCA, St Vincent de Paul, Red Cross, the Salvation Army—the list is endless—would all struggle to deliver the much-needed services that they provide to the needy and the disadvantaged in our society.

While it is difficult to single out one particular group over another, I do think it is important to acknowledge the enormous volunteer force that helped make the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games the best games ever. Who will ever forget the 50,000 volunteers who were evident everywhere in Sydney and in force at every Olympic venue and event? They provided great assistance to games visitors and did it willingly and with a smile.

Certainly in Canberra the volunteer commitment to deliver Olympic football at Canberra Stadium was impressive. There were over 600 committed and enthusiastic volunteers. Significantly, 10 years after the event those volunteers are still staging reunions. We had one in September of last year that celebrated their commitment and involvement and the personal joy and satisfaction it brought to them. Surely that is the

real blessing and value of being a volunteer—the joy it brings others and the sense of real achievement and personal satisfaction it gives.

I am proud to acknowledge that the ACT and Queensland share the honour of having the highest percentage of their residents volunteering their time. Ms Porter suggests over 94,000 Canberra citizens are engaged in some form of voluntary work, and that certainly is an impressive figure.

I know for myself what personal satisfaction my voluntary activities provide me. The fundraising activities for the Red Shield Appeal of the Salvation Army, door knocking for the annual St Vincent de Paul Society appeal, the sausage sizzles for numerous schools, disability and multicultural associations, and of course the football and netball clubs over the years, have all given me great personal satisfaction.

I am proud of the efforts of my Calwell community and friends in helping to establish the Calwell Neighbourhood Watch and the role that many other friends have played and are continuing to play with the Tuggeranong Community Council.

I would particularly like to highlight one voluntary activity that I and Mr Hargreaves from the other side of the chamber are currently engaged in, and that is the Celebrity Singing Bee at the Diabetes ACT Guardian Angel Gala Ball. Now in its fifth year, the ball is being held on Saturday, 14 May at the Hellenic Club of Canberra. Diabetes ACT regards this event as one of the most anticipated and arguably the most entertaining event of its kind in Canberra. It is viewed as an event not to be missed.

The Celebrity Singing Bee is the major fundraiser of the event, with nine so-called “celebrities”—their choice of words, not mine—singing for our supper and for the enjoyment, I guess we can say, of the people who will be attending. I note modestly that I am currently marginally ahead of Mr Hargreaves in the fundraising challenge. Possibly it is because my sponsors fancy if they pay me enough I will not sing, and that may be an appropriate strategy. I should add that I also thank Ms Bresnan for her contribution to both Mr Hargreaves and me for that event.

The leading fundraiser amongst our group of participants has raised over \$16,000 to date and has given Mr Hargreaves, me and the rest of our group a very big task to get near that figure. My colleagues Zed Seselja and Jeremy Hanson have played a part in past years’ celebrity singing bees. But, as far as I understand, only Mr Hargreaves has so far supported this in an active way. I would encourage all members of the Assembly to perhaps look at future opportunities to support Diabetes Australia in their fundraising efforts.

The fact that the ACT public service actively encourages community service by offering leave for those who engage in volunteer work demonstrates we are a community with a heart. I am therefore somewhat disappointed that Ms Porter feels the need through the last part of her motion to mandate altruism for Assembly members. Her motion suggests that members of the Assembly lead by example and undertake at least three days of volunteering each year auspiced by a community sector organisation.

I would ask: what member of this chamber does not already undertake more than the three days that Ms Porter feels we must mandate? I respectfully suggest it is somewhat offensive to presume that we do not already engage in such activities. That is why, on behalf of the opposition, I will seek leave to move amendments to the motion. I think it is important if we recognise the valuable work that volunteers in our community provide that we also acknowledge the role that that we as members of this Assembly play in our support of volunteer organisations.

As I have already suggested, I think it is unnecessary to mandate any volunteer work that we may offer in our private time. Indeed, is it not a principle of volunteering that it is not compulsory; that volunteering is a matter of choice? Ms Porter's motion removes that choice. By suggesting that this Assembly lead by example and undertake at least three days of volunteering each year, there is at least a suggestion that any volunteer activity we may choose to do in the future is in fact predicated on our commitment to this motion.

I think subparagraph 2(c) of her motion is totally unnecessary and rather denigrates what is otherwise an appropriate recognition of the importance of volunteering. I would urge Ms Porter and members of the Assembly to instead adopt the opposition's alternative wording. I do commend Ms Porter for her motion overall. I do support and the Liberal Party supports the ethos of volunteers and the commitment of the many, many thousands of people in Canberra who volunteer, as Ms Porter and I have pointed out in our respective speeches.

But I do urge us to just have a little bit of logic about this. This would make an extremely good script for a *Monty Python* sketch or for John Cleese to have a look at because I think it is just incredible. The principle of volunteerism is that it is not compulsory. Volunteering is a matter of choice. So I hope that there is some logic. But, overall, I do commend Ms Porter for the majority, the other sections, of her motion.

I seek leave to move my amendments together.

Leave granted.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I move:

(1) Insert new subparagraph (1)(f):

“(f) the importance of Members in this Assembly in supporting volunteer organisations in the ACT; and”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on:

(a) the ACT Government to promote this existing community service leave entitlement to all staff within ACT Government agencies;

- (b) the ACT Government to support all ACT public servants to utilise their community service leave each year; and
- (c) the Members of this Assembly to voluntarily take an active role in supporting and taking part in volunteer opportunities in the ACT.”.

**MS BRESNAN** (Brindabella) (6.30): I thank Ms Porter for this motion today. Volunteers and the services they perform are vital to the ACT community. We have already heard from Ms Porter and Mr Doszpot some figures on the level of volunteering in Australia—34 per cent of the total population volunteer. That is around 5.4 million people. This includes around 94,000 people in the ACT. As has already been noted, we have one of the highest rates of volunteering in the country, with 32 per cent of our total population involved in some form of voluntary work.

Canberrans are out there every day running sports events, providing food for the homeless and passing on skills and advice to everyone from primary school children to seniors studying at the University of the Third Age. Without them, as Mr Doszpot has already said, Canberra would be a much less interesting and inclusive place.

Every not-for-profit organisation owes its continued existence to the efforts of an army of volunteers who answer the phones, sort the donations and run the fundraising events which make all that work possible. Who can imagine a Canberra without the RSPCA, which works so hard to protect the animals in this town and to re-home lost and abandoned pets? How many people have the staff of Lifeline saved with their counselling service and, coincidentally, how many of us could manage without the wonderful Lifeline book fairs that keep us in reading matter throughout the year? How many of us would like to face a typical summer without the fact that the volunteer firefighters are there to help protect us from the threat of bushfires?

These are only a few of the many organisations which provide vital services to our community. The fact is that the Canberra we know could not exist without the generous donation of time and expertise that our volunteers provide. As our population ages, volunteering has a double role to play. Many of our volunteers are older people who have retired from paid employment but still want to make a contribution. Their work benefits the community twice: firstly, the actual value of the work itself; and, secondly, their involvement contributes to their own wellbeing by keeping them active and socially connected.

Community organisations are an essential element in promoting volunteer activities. People who have taken part in activities through clubs and societies often aspire to become volunteers themselves. In fact, knowing where to go to volunteer can be more difficult than actually doing the volunteer work. This is where organisations such as Volunteering ACT are so important. They provide an avenue for those who would like to help but do not really know where to start. They also provide support for both volunteers and organisations with advice and skills training so that organisations can find the people they need and people can find the voluntary work that they want and that suits them.

The Greens support what Ms Porter has called for through the motion today. It is important that the ACT public service know they can access voluntary leave and are encouraged to do so. A number of people would not know they can access that, so I think it is important to promote that. There would not only be immediate benefits to community organisations in having more people involved in volunteering work, but it would also assist public servants in building stronger relationships with the community sector and having a greater appreciation for the recipients of community services and the conditions in which community organisations work. It is very much about empathy and building trust.

The Greens would be pleased to see MLAs leading by example and volunteering hours. Many of us already volunteer, as has already been pointed out today. I acknowledge that the work we generally do in the community involves volunteering our time. Some of the organisations which I have personally been involved in over recent years include the RSPCA, where I volunteered for a number of years, the Women's Electoral Lobby, Amnesty International and refugee groups. Clean Up Australia Day is something I and many other members here do every year. There was also a great day recently when several members from the Assembly and also federal members from all political parties helped garden at a new house that Tandem had opened at Lions haven at Kambah.

As many people know, I do Bollywood dancing, and that involves fundraising work, where we perform at fundraising events run by the school and also for other organisations, including quite a number of events for the Indian community in Canberra. That is always good fun, as it is doing something you enjoy, as voluntary work is, but it also involves making a contribution to groups involved with the Indian community as well as fundraising for other organisations and activities.

Ms Le Couteur has been involved at a very high level with the Australian Conservation Foundation. In fact, she was on their national council for 17 years, which is quite an achievement. She has been a member of the Australian Solar Energy Society for over 30 years, and she has volunteered for Solar House Day since about 1988. Ms Hunter has had a long record with the Red Cross and Meals on Wheels, and Mr Rattenbury, as we know, for many years was involved in sporting organisations and worked for Greenpeace before being elected. Any of us who have worked in a paid or unpaid capacity for non-government organisations knows that there is a significant amount of out-of-hours time that is given to these organisations.

Greens staff, who are a key support for Greens' MLAs, also have a proud history of volunteering. Some of their involvement in current and recent times includes the Wilderness Society, the Conservation Council, the Mt Jerrabomberra Preservation Society, Brownsville community campaign centre, community radio 2XX, Community Broadcasting Foundation, the ACT Council of Culture and Community Organisations, the ANU food co-op, Mental Illness Education ACT, Home Birth Australia, the Australian College of Midwives, ACT Welfare and Legal Rights Centre, Red Cross and Life Education. I have to give extra brownie points to the person who did Life Education. I will not say who; they know who they are. They dressed up as a giraffe, so they get extra brownie points for that act of volunteering. There has also

been a good commitment to activities involving dogs without homes, be it walking dogs at the pound and the RSPCA or assisting in fostering dogs.

There are many benefits to be gained not just for the subject of the volunteering—the animals or the land—but also for the people doing the volunteering as we develop a greater understanding of those in our community who require assistance.

I will talk now to Mr Doszpot's amendments. I acknowledge the points Mr Doszpot has made in his amendments. As he said, all of us give time to activities, and it is safe to say that we probably give well more than three days of our time volunteering. One of the great things we get to do as MLAs is various bits of volunteering with a range of organisations so we get to see what these different organisations do.

**Mr Doszpot:** So why are we mandating it?

**MS BRESNAN:** I take your point, Mr Doszpot, but in terms of the part of Ms Porter's motion that specifically Mr Doszpot has proposed amendments to, I think it is asking the Assembly to take a lead in promoting in the community. That is a positive thing for us as MLAs and as prominent people or leaders in the community to do. I do not interpret it as directing or mandating us as members to do something. I do not agree with that point Mr Doszpot has made, and I also do not agree with the point that was made that if members were volunteering we would reach the three days and that is all we would do. I have already mentioned that we do a lot of things outside of hours with various organisations and we devote a lot of time to activities in the community, so I just do not think that is something that would happen.

I do not see this part of the motion as denigrating what we already do. We should take the motion in the spirit in which it was intended—that is, promoting volunteering and asking us as MLAs to take a lead role. For that reason, I will not be supporting Mr Doszpot's amendments. I take his, point, but I do not see it as denigrating. It should be taken in the spirit in which it was intended, and we will be supporting Ms Porter's motion today.

**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) (6.40): I rise to speak very briefly in support of Ms Porter's motion. I thank her for bringing it on today, and I thank other members for their contributions. It is always interesting to see how members in the Assembly fill their time with volunteer organisations.

We understand that volunteering is indeed a key part of a good society, and Canberra is a good society. I know there are very many active volunteers across our community. We are celebrating 10 years of volunteering in the ACT. Just as a side note, some of you may be aware that the former Chief Executive of Communities@Work, Ms Maureen Cane, who was also the Canberran of the Year 2011, has recently been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Volunteering ACT. There is no such thing as keeping a good woman down or out of being occupied. I welcome the opportunity to continue to work with Maureen Cane in her new role, and I wish her well for that.

As Ms Porter said, this year we are celebrating 10 years of volunteers, and we should celebrate and recognise the role of volunteers. The ACT government is developing a set of principles, a volunteer statement, which will guide the government's understanding and support of volunteering in the ACT. Whilst that is still very much in early stages of the development, some of the principles that may be included will focus on acknowledging and valuing the vital role of volunteers, acknowledging the role and processes of volunteering in promoting social inclusion, wellbeing and resilient communities by recognising, celebrating the contribution of volunteers, and noting how we can contribute to developing and enabling a dynamic, adaptable, flexible and innovative environment where volunteering is safe and supported.

Volunteering is supported in the ACT at a number of levels—an organisational level and a legislative level as well. With our working with vulnerable people checks we have already committed to have a fee waiver for volunteers who undertake this check. Because it is a card attached to the person, they will be able to transfer that and have that wherever they go in their volunteering activities.

I also welcome the part of Ms Porter's motion that calls on this chamber and staff members to lead by example. I know we already do good work. I do not think there is any need, from what I have heard, to encourage members—and their family and friends—to commit to the volunteering time. Needless to say, staff in my office are volunteers, and they will turn their minds to what new endeavours they can do. Thank you to members. I commend Ms Porter's motion and the spirit in which she has brought it forward.

Amendments negatived.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (6.43): I thank members for their contributions to this debate and their great reflections on their personal volunteering and other examples they are aware of. As has been said, Maureen Cane is the new CEO of Volunteering ACT. We are a very small community, and I think in some ways we go around in circles in that I was the first paid employee of Tuggeranong Community Service as part of the steering committee that formed that organisation. I helped form that service, which became Communities@Work, of which Maureen Cane was the director. She resigned from that position and has now taken up the position that I resigned from when I ran for this Assembly. As I say, we go around in circles.

**Mr Coe:** Is she going to run for Ginninderra?

**MS PORTER:** Well, maybe one day she may do that. But I think she lives in Tuggeranong, Mr Coe. I thank members for their contributions, as I said. Reflecting on Mr Doszpot's amendments, I acknowledge that all of us in this place volunteer many, many, days each year—in fact, it is weeks each year. However, paragraph (2)(c) of my motion is just to acknowledge that we will show leadership and highlight what volunteering we do. We will do this, just as many organisations and corporations have volunteer teams volunteering together or encourage their staff to take a certain number of days off each year to volunteer. Of course the volunteering is of their choice and of course it is not compulsory in any way.

I will reflect on one volunteer program I did not have time to reflect on before. I noted earlier the agreement the SES volunteers have, but I did not have time to read that agreement, which is of interest. Up to four days for each emergency is granted to an employee who is a member of a state or territory emergency service, firefighting service, search and rescue unit or other volunteer service performing similar functions to fulfil an obligation in the event of a civil emergency. Additional paid leave may be approved by the chief executive for any volunteer duty required to be performed by an employee who is a member of a state or territory emergency service.

According to the 2009-10 JACS annual report—I am sure every member in this place has read the report and is aware of these figures—795 ACT FB CFU volunteers volunteered during that period, and the community fire units are another one of my volunteer activities. There were 480 ACT RFS who volunteered during that time, 228 ACT SES volunteers and 74 MAPS, or mapping and planning support, volunteers were engaged in emergency services.

Again, I dwell on the volunteering policing program, which is a program Volunteering ACT assisted in developing and implementing when I was the CEO. The AFP volunteers and policing program has 41 police volunteers at the moment—23 females and 18 males—who come from a wide range of backgrounds. The age range is from 37 to 80 years of age. Their roles include role playing for recruits, assistance with administration, front-line office support, ceremonial support, bus driving, justice of peace duties, letterbox drops and poster distribution—sounds like some of us when we are doing our campaigning—keyhole surveys, meet-and-greet roles, assistance with consensual fingerprinting, catering and conference support, support for the Chequered Ribbon Association and assistance to police in community events. That is a wide of range of voluntary activities that the volunteer police carry out, and it is a great example of the variety of volunteering that people can choose within one organisation.

Again, I thank members for their contributions. I am encouraged by the Assembly's support of this motion.

Motion agreed to.

## **Adjournment**

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## **Mrs Austra Skuja Japan earthquake and tsunami**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.48): I rise to put on the record a very special achievement by a Canberra resident on 16 April, that person being Mrs Austra Skuja, who turned 100. I had the pleasure of going to her birthday celebration at the Canberra National Seventh-Day Adventist Church on 16 April, and it was a lovely occasion. It was a

pleasure to join Pastor Sid Griffith, other church elders and the rest of the congregation in celebrating her wonderful 100 years.

Mrs Skuja has a fascinating story. She was born in Latvia in 1911 and came to Australia soon after World War II. She was a dressmaker, and her clients in Canberra included the diplomatic corps, politicians and many prominent Canberra VIPs. In a *Canberra Times* article on 16 April there was an interesting story where she said that the daughter of then Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies “came to my door” and she was unable to help Heather Menzies with her wedding dress because she was so busy. Such was her commitment to her existing clients and the pride she took in her work that she would only take on jobs that she knew she could complete, and complete to the fine standard that she was renowned for.

Mrs Skuja was married for 51 years to Karlis Skuja. Sadly, he passed away in 1989. He too was a member of the congregation. Mrs Skuja is still very active as a keen gardener, particularly with vegetables and flowers, and she has a personal mission of trying to teach by example the younger generation, especially young married couples and their children, by inviting them to a Sabbath lunch and treating them with healthy and well-presented meals. She is a real role model to the congregation and to all she knows. I congratulate her on her 100 years and look forward to many more birthdays to come.

I would also like to put on the record my thanks to Professor Brian and Mrs Dianne Anderson, who hosted a fundraising event at their house in Red Hill on the weekend, on Sunday 1 May. The event, entitled “Help Japan”, was a charity concert in their garden, raising funds for the Australian Red Cross Japan and Pacific Disaster Appeal. I note that Ms Porter and Mr Hanson were also in attendance. It was a fantastic event. I am not sure how much money was raised in the end, but it was a significant amount. So I really do commend Dianne in particular for the many hours of work she put into that event.

The event included a concert in the garden, there was a book of condolence, there was an opportunity to hang a prayer message on a tree, there were kimono, origami and bonsai displays, and there was Japanese food on sale, in addition to a raffle. It was supported by the Australia-Japan Society.

Given that 400,000 people in Japan were made homeless by the recent tragedy, which is comparable to Canberra’s population, it does put into perspective the enormity of the situation and the challenges that Japan faces. So it was a pleasure to go there. I note that the Ambassador of Japan, His Excellency Mr Sato, was also in attendance. As I said, it was a pleasure to attend, and I thank all those who volunteered for making it the success that it was.

### **World Asthma Day**

**MS BRESNAN** (Brindabella) (6.53): I would like to speak in support of World Asthma Day, which was on 3 May this week. As we know, asthma is very prevalent in Australia. I will just read out some figures which I think are quite relevant as to why we need to talk about asthma and particularly encourage people to manage the

symptoms of it. As an asthma sufferer myself, I know how important it is to have an asthma plan. It is one of the main things which people need to do.

With one in nine children and one in 10 adults affected, asthma affects the whole community. Over 400 Australians—which I think is quite an astounding figure—still die from asthma each year in Australia. The Asthma Foundation have quite rightly said this is unacceptable. That is why we have World Asthma Day, to promote the facts and figures around it. In 2007-08, 9.9 per cent of the population stated they had current asthma. Rounding these numbers, we can say that about 10 per cent of the population—around two million people—have asthma currently. Asthma's prevalence in Australia is high by international standards, and the reason for this is still unknown.

In terms of, as I said, managing asthma, only 21 per cent of the Australians who have asthma have a written asthma action plan. In the 2007-08 survey, 54 per cent of people with asthma reported using medication for their asthma in the last two weeks, and the rate of smoking among people with asthma is the same, if not higher, than the rate of smoking among people without asthma. As anyone would know, smoking when you have asthma is not a particularly smart thing to do because it is a respiratory disease and it significantly impacts on your health if you smoke.

Up to 90 per cent of people who have asthma inhalers do not use them correctly. Occupational asthma is the most common occupational lung disease in the developed world, with at least nine per cent of cases of adults with asthma either caused or activated by occupational factors. It is thought that up to half of people over 55 with asthma have not been diagnosed.

This is why managing asthma and knowing how to do this is so important. It is obviously the sort of message that days like World Asthma Day can and do help promote. With winter coming on, a time when many people's asthma does worsen, it is important for these messages around managing your asthma, using your medications correctly, to be reinforced. I hope that World Asthma Day was a successful day. The theme was actually "stay in your PJs for asthma". Obviously that was not something we could do on budget day here in the Assembly, but I hope it was a successful day and that the messages around managing asthma have got through to people.

### **Sustainability strategies**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (6.55): Mr Speaker, earlier today the Assembly dealt with, in fact, your motion on the notice paper about sustainability strategies. I moved an amendment seeking to substitute the words "call on" with "direct" the government to do something. We had an interesting response from the Chief Minister, who thought it was appalling that the Assembly would direct the government to do anything. I will check the *Hansard* when it is published. He asserted that basically we should not and could not do these things.

The problem for Mr Stanhope on this issue is that he has form. Indeed, when Mr Stanhope was the Leader of the Opposition on 29 November 2000, what happened? The then opposition, the ACT Labor Party, moved a motion to direct the

government to do something. Putting that issue aside, it is the principle. Mr Stanhope always comes down here and talks about his principles, the separation of powers and all the things that he believes in. But the last line of Mr Stanhope's speech on the issue finishes with:

... but we—

meaning the Assembly, or indeed the Labor Party—

have our views, we have expressed them, and we expect this government to respond to them.

I draw people's attention to page 1052 on 29 November 2000. It is about an inquiry into disability services. Mr Wood, the then shadow minister, then moves the motion and at point 1 it reads "directs the government" to do something. There had been discussion in the Assembly a period previously. The Assembly came back and was not happy with the response of the government of the day. So what did they do? They directed the government to do something.

It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition at the time was one Jon Stanhope. It was his shadow minister who moved the motion, which was agreed to by the Independents and the Green of the day and others. Indeed, Mr Wood closes with:

Let's get on with it. Let's pass this today. Again, I ask the government to accept the will of the Assembly.

It is interesting that the short memory of the Chief Minister has failed him yet again. The precedent in this place for the Assembly directing the government to do something was set by the Labor Party by a Labor Party motion. It directed the government of the day to do something. It is interesting that the Chief Minister complains in the way that he does today. Members should read what he said. It will be an interesting read, I am quite sure. The precedent, Jon Stanhope, was set by you as Leader of the Opposition when your caucus decided to pass a motion directing the government of the day to do something. If you are upset with that then you need to come back and explain your actions 10 years ago when it suited you and why it should not suit you today.

## **Kiribati**

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Molonglo) (6.59): This is my Kiribati report part 2, because I did not manage to finish it all yesterday.

On Wednesday we went on a tour of a number of Australian-funded projects in Kiribati and it was a really interesting day. Probably the highlight for me was that in the morning we visited the School and Centre for Children with Special Needs. I do not know if I mentioned that the population of Kiribati is about 110,000. This school had 90 kids in it and it had a huge mix. It had deaf kids—there are a lot of deaf kids because there are a lot of inner ear infections in young children—blind kids and autistic kids. Part of the school was actually in a chicken shed.

**Ms Hunter:** Really?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Well, it was. It is a parent-run school. It has had a small amount of aid from AusAID for some capital things but it is largely self-funded. One of the people that we saw there was a very wonderful and enthusiastic young woman who was an Australian Volunteers Abroad worker and she certainly was incredibly committed. I was very moved by the school. Basically, they have probably got less equipment in some ways than I have up in my office. They have virtually nothing for all those kids. We took books. They had probably a couple of dozen books. They would like Duplo; they have probably got the quantity of Duplo that I have got in my office. They do not have desks for everybody. You name it, they do not have it.

So one of my intentions—I will be sending an email to all of you shortly—is to try and gather together some materials to send to the school because, quite frankly, most of us in our back sheds have got something which they could really use. I am just trying to work out what the costing is going to be to send it there because transport to Kiribati is very expensive. However, we as the Assembly have already made the commitment to send some of our old computers to Kiribati, so I am hoping that we will be able to piggyback this onto that and make it affordable. Max is working on that. I went to see a couple of training institutions after that, but as I am running out of time I will not talk about those.

In the afternoon we met with the office of the President and we talked about the problems confronting Kiribati. The average age of the Kiribati population is under 20. All of their high schools are on the main island of Tarawa, but of course a lot of their population live on smaller islands so that means that Tarawa is full of adolescents who do not have their immediate family with them. You can work out for yourself the sort of social issues that that creates, plus of course there is poverty and nowhere to go. So that is one of their bigger problems.

Water is another of their bigger problems and I was told about issues that people had with solar pumps. The problem with solar pumps is that they work so well and they do not cost anything to run. Kiribati gets all its fresh water from fresh water lenses and people used their pumps until they got down to the salt water, thus ruining the lens, possibly forever, certainly for a very long time.

One of the biggest parts of the Kiribati economy, I was told, was remittances. One of the reasons they are putting so much emphasis now on education is that one of their serious economic strategies is for people to leave the country and come and work in Australia. They are trying to get people qualified to Australian standards to work in Australia and send money back home to Kiribati. It is a pretty desperate economic strategy.

As an instant expert having been there for three days, and a Green, it seemed to me there were a few things from a physical point of view they should be looking at. Bikes seemed one of the obvious things. As I said yesterday, the country is basically dead flat. They have very few bikes because their roads are very narrow and pot-hole-y so the four-wheel drives, which are the majority of cars there, would wipe out a bike if you were brave enough to ride a bike. But if they could do something to give bikes a fighting chance it is a perfect bike situation because the country is small and flat.

Petrol, and everything, is expensive in Kiribati. They are short of water and they have real problems with disposing of waste, so the composting toilet would seem like a great idea.

### **Japan earthquake and tsunami**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo) (7.04): I would like to echo the comments made by Mr Coe in his adjournment speech regarding the generosity of Dianne and Brian Anderson who conducted an event at their home in support of the Japanese community in the wake of the terrible earthquake and tsunami that caused the loss of so much life and so much suffering and homelessness that we have seen in Japan.

As Mr Coe mentioned, the event was a fundraising venture. It was a great day and a beautiful afternoon. Mr Coe, I and Ms Porter were there. The gardens were looking absolutely sensational. I am not quite sure how many people were there, but it would have been in the hundreds, and they all enjoyed some great entertainment and great activities, as outlined by Mr Coe. The singing, the cellist, who was 11 years old, and the choirs were quite special. Sadly, I missed Dianne playing—I think it was the organ or the piano she was playing; I think the organ—but I had my five-year-old with me, who only had a limited amount of time that he could pay attention, so rather than take the risk of any misadventure we left before I was able to hear her.

The amount that was raised—I do not think Mr Coe had the final figure—was in the order of \$10,000 and I think it is just remarkable that Dianne and Brian, who opened up their home, organised this event for the Japanese people. Dianne and Brian Anderson are very generous people. This was not an isolated event. They regularly open up their home to the public so they can come and look at their gardens and they have put an enormous amount of their time and effort, particularly Dianne, into the eisteddfod in the ACT and the choral activities associated with that. Brian has a great history with the Japanese people and indeed made many introductory remarks at the event in Japanese.

So it was a great day, a great event, and I congratulate Dianne and Brian on their generosity that they have shown not only to the ACT community but also to the Japanese people.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 7.07 pm.**