



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

17 MARCH 2015

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MADAM SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) took the chair at 10 am, made a formal recognition that the Assembly was meeting on the lands of the traditional custodians, and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Leave of absence

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.01): I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Mrs Jones until the first sitting in August due to maternity reasons.

I think we are all aware that maternity matters are pending.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing Committees Membership

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

That Mrs Jones be discharged from the:

(1) Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety until the first sitting day in August and Mr Hanson (Leader of the Opposition) be appointed in her place; and

(2) Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs until the first sitting day in August and Mr Coe be appointed in her place.

Mr Smyth: Could I say thank you to the government for agreeing to consent to the pair. It has taken a weight off her mind; thanks very much for that consideration.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 29

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.02): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 29, dated 10 March 2015, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 29 contains the committee's comments on four bills, four pieces of subordinate legislation and three government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee Report 4

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.02): I present the following report:

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee—
Report 4—*Inquiry into the Sourcing and Supply of Dental Prostheses and
Appliances to Australian Dental Practitioners from Overseas*, dated 5 March
2015, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I am particularly pleased to be able to present this report on an issue which is obviously close to my former professional background as a dentist, before I entered the Assembly. I would like to thank the members of the committee who assisted me in this inquiry—Ms Lawder, Mr Wall, Ms Fitzharris, and of course Ms Berry when she was formerly on the committee—as well as the committee secretary, Mrs Kosseck.

The inquiry focused on the sourcing and supply of dental prostheses and appliances used by Australian dental practitioners and being sourced from overseas. During the inquiry concerns were raised by various members of the industry about the sourcing of overseas dental appliances, and allegations were made about quality, but there seemed to be a lack of evidence to support those concerns.

At the same time, the committee was concerned that the current regulatory framework to allow custom-made appliances to be used was not as fully developed as would be desirable. As a result, the committee made a recommendation that both the TGA and the Dental Board of Australia consider instituting regulations to enable the requirement that dental practitioners inform patients of the source of the dental appliance that has been installed. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services— Standing Committee Report 6

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.05): I present the following report:

Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing
Committee—Report 6—*Inquiry into the Implementation of Action Plan 2
(Climate Change Strategy)*, dated 16 March 2015, together with a copy of the
extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I am pleased today to present the sixth report of the Eighth Assembly for the planning, environment and territory and municipal services committee. The Assembly referred the implementation of action plan 2 to the committee on 27 February 2014. I would like to thank the previous chair, Yvette Berry, and other members of the committee—Dr Bourke, Mr Coe and Mr Wall.

Following a briefing from the Environment and Planning Directorate, the committee chose not to call for submissions or hold public hearings. The committee considered the mechanisms built into action plan 2, which require regular reporting to the Assembly, and agreed that these were adequate. The committee has therefore made a single recommendation that the Assembly continue to review these reports and consider a more detailed assessment of the implementation following the release of implementation status report 2 in 2017.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank directorate officials for their contribution to this inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR SMYTH (Brindabella): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

Continuing resolution 5A was agreed by the Legislative Assembly on 23 August 2012. The requirements of the resolution set out a transparency mechanism to promote accountability in the consideration of statutory appointments. The resolution requires relevant standing committees which consider statutory appointments to report on a six-monthly basis and present a schedule listing appointments considered during the applicable period.

The schedule is required to include the statutory appointments considered and, for each appointment, the date on which the request from the responsible minister for consultation was received and the date on which the committee's feedback was provided.

For the applicable reporting period—1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014—the committee considered eight statutory appointments. I therefore present the following paper:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—
8th Assembly—Period 1 July to 31 December 2014.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

In its report on the Appropriation (Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication) Bill 2014-2015, the committee noted that successful implementation of the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme would effectively require a coordinated approach across several directorates and agencies. To ensure adequate coordination and monitoring, the committee recommended that the government table quarterly progress reports on the implementation of the scheme. The government agreed with the recommendation, stating:

The Government has already agreed to do so. The Chief Minister's Ministerial Statement on 30 October 2014 was the first such report.

Accordingly, as an ongoing inquiry, the committee resolved on 10 March 2015 to inquire into all tabled quarterly progress reports and report to the Assembly as follows:

- 1) on any items or matters in those reports, or any circumstances connected with them, to which the Committee is of the opinion that the attention of the Assembly should be directed; and
- 2) any other relevant matter.

Business development strategy Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.09), by leave: I start by saying I am determined to create jobs, to diversify the local economy and to strengthen our city. As Chief Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Economic Development, the focus of my leadership is on the renewal and economic independence of our modern, vibrant city, and that requires implementing a coordinated and comprehensive business development strategy that is flexible enough to cope with changing external environments while setting the firm foundations for those areas of growth where we have natural competitive advantages.

We need to be bold, to grasp opportunities as they arise, as well as have the capacity to create new industries. For some time now we have not been able to simply rely upon the federal government to support our wider city. Canberra is changing, and our economy must change with it. My government is driving this change so that our local businesses can compete here and anywhere in Australia or, indeed, anywhere in the world.

In 2012 I launched “Growth, diversification and jobs: a business development strategy for the ACT”. The strategy outlined a vision for growing Canberra’s economy, building on a commitment to private sector growth and jobs. We set out to achieve this by focusing on three key areas: fostering the right business environment, supporting business investment and accelerating business innovation. In September 2013 I provided the first report to the Assembly on the implementation of the strategy. Today I am tabling the second business development strategy implementation report. It reports against the 26 actions set out in the strategy and shows that all of the actions have been successfully implemented.

I will also update the Assembly on what has occurred since the first report, with a particular emphasis on two significant achievements that are a direct outcome of the business development strategy. They are the establishment of the CBR Innovation Network and Invest Canberra. To provide context for the strategy, it is worth outlining the current performance of the ACT economy, a strong, diverse and sustainable economy, with strong ties to our wider region, that underpins the Canberra community now and into the future. In broad terms, the economy continues to perform extremely well, especially given the job cuts inflicted on the ACT’s economy by the federal government.

There is a clear indication that our economic development approach is paying dividends. We are a more diverse and more resilient economy than we were in 1996 because we have been prepared to build on our strengths. While I am deeply concerned about negative, short-term impacts on our economy from cuts in the federal budget, we are working with the private sector to shore up our economy to weather any changes over the medium term.

Our focus is on ensuring that we emerge out of this period as soon as possible and in a stronger position. That is why my government is stimulating the economy and providing confidence by developing and growing emerging enterprises, entrepreneurs and sectors to expand our economic base and grow local employment. That is why we are promoting Canberra to the region, the nation and the world to attract tourism and business investment. That is why we are continuing the development of the CBR brand.

It is why we are conducting ongoing regulatory reform and red tape reduction. It is why we are progressing our payroll tax reform agenda and why we are attracting foreign investment and skills through niche programs for foreign investors and skilled and business migrants. It is why we are growing our export capabilities, including partnering with our universities to support their growth and their international outreach. It is why we are nurturing grassroots sports and elite athletes to solidify our reputation as a centre of sporting excellence.

It is why we are supporting events and activities that maximise the value of the visitor economy in the ACT. It is why we are supporting the development and presentation of the arts in the territory. It is why we are producing major events for our city and managing significant sports and event infrastructure. And it is why we are leveraging our land advantage and infrastructure to transform Canberra into a dynamic, creative

city of the future that is a preferred location for people to work, for people to live and for people to visit.

This series of actions is reflected in the latest ACT economic data, which shows that, despite the commonwealth's public service cuts, our unemployment rate stands at 4.5 per cent, which is 1.8 percentage points below the national rate of 6.3 per cent. The ACT economy not only has managed to absorb these job cuts but has, in fact, grown total employment overall. We continue to attract people to the world's most livable city, with 4,700 people moving to Canberra to make our city home last year. Our participation rate, at 70 per cent, is a full 5.3 percentage points higher than the national average. GSP growth has averaged 2.6 per cent since 2008, and in 2014 the economy continued to expand by 0.7 of a per cent, a very good outcome, given the ongoing commonwealth job cuts and budget restraint.

An important component of our growth has been our ability to consistently grow our service exports. Over the last five years the growth in our service exports has averaged approximately 8½ per cent per annum. We have maintained these strong results because our business development strategy targeted investment in activities that maximise opportunities to diversify our economic base.

Diversification of the economy is a microeconomic building process; it requires consistent and patient policy and well-conceived programs. Business development strategy and its implementation is, indeed, an excellent example of patient and consistent policy making. For example, we assisted the establishment of the GRIFFIN accelerator program. I was pleased to officially open the 2015 program, with two themes: servicing government, and sport and healthy activity, the latter to be run in conjunction with the University of Canberra and the Australian Institute of Sport. I understand that GRIFFIN investor mentors have already committed \$300,000 to the accelerator for this year, and the number of mentors that are investing in the GRIFFIN accelerator has grown from 11 to 19. GRIFFIN expects to double the number of start-up companies working through the accelerator in 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Nick McNaughton and Craig Davis and, indeed, the other mentors for the considerable effort they have put in to making the GRIFFIN accelerator program a success.

One of my main priorities in the business development strategy was to support the commonwealth's digital economy programs and the rollout of the national broadband network. Of course, since coming to power in 2013 the Abbott government has downgraded the NBN and cut back on its support for the digital economy. The ACT government, however, remain committed to growing our digital economy. We have launched the Digital Canberra action plan and committed the government to a series of measures to build on our digital credentials. As members would be aware, the first phase of the CBR free wi-fi network has recently been launched, and the program is well underway to roll out this free wi-fi service to all of our town centres.

In addition, a series of capability building workshops for businesses has been delivered, and the STEM 4 digital business internship program, which provides for up to 75 per cent of the cost of a STEM undergraduate to work with local companies for up to three months, is now operating in the market. Local innovative companies are

benefiting from having specialist undergraduates working for them while the undergraduates learn about innovation in business. Additionally, the Digital Canberra challenge is connecting ACT government staff with innovative small and medium-size enterprises to develop real solutions to ACT government service delivery challenges and to drive more effective service to citizens. We have also made significant progress in driving the acceleration of innovation and entrepreneurship within the territory economy.

Following consultation with the key stakeholders, I announced in March last year the establishment of the CBR Innovation Network to drive the innovation and diversification of the territory's economy. The network is now operational as a not-for-profit company. Mr Tony Henshaw, the first chair of the new Canberra Business Chamber and chair of the Digital Canberra challenge, has been appointed chair of the network. Dr Sarah Pearson, formerly the CEO of ANU Enterprise, has taken on the role of CEO of the new network. The ANU, NICTA, CSIRO, University of Canberra and the University of New South Wales Canberra have all signed on as foundation members and have agreed to contribute \$50,000 per annum to be members of the network. This is a first for Australia, and it makes the ACT the leader in innovation policy and program delivery in Australia.

The network now has a physical presence in Moore Street, in the city, premises that the ACT government has provided to the network at a peppercorn rental for the first two years. The new premises are home to the network, a new location for the Entry 29 co-working space, a home for the GRIFFIN accelerator and will soon host a best practice incubator for potential high growth companies. The establishment of the network is of fundamental importance to the future of the territory's economy and represents my government's new approach to innovation and jobs growth. It is a unique ACT response to unique ACT factors. It has the full support of stakeholders and builds on the ACT government's ongoing efforts to drive innovation in the city.

The vision for the network is to link businesses and entrepreneurs to accelerate innovation and growth to maximise wealth creation. To achieve this, the network will develop strong links across participants, identify gaps and develop strategies for the innovation ecosystem. It has contracted the provision of the Canberra BusinessPoint service to the Canberra Business Chamber and, in the medium term, will review the mix of services and the delivery of them to maximise the growth of entrepreneurial wealth-creating companies for our city. And, while the network will have a key role in ensuring that services are available for innovative firms to grow, it will not only be a service provider; it will also have a key role in developing the ACT's innovation ecosystem.

It is already developing a reputation as the principal proponent of a new approach to accelerating innovation in the territory. It will be the go-to point for developing the innovation ecosystem in Canberra and will clearly articulate to the government new and different approaches, broader than simply advising on program delivery options. It will provide policy grunt as well as practical implementation advice.

The territory government and the foundation members have committed to the network for an initial period of five years. During this time the network will become a leader in

driving a strategic approach to innovation and diversification. The network has an opportunity to reach out to a wide variety of stakeholders, both big and small, right across the territory economy. The innovation network will also play a major role in the delivery of the government's digital agenda. Not only will it promote digital technology as a driver of innovation but it will project our city's digital credentials both nationally and internationally.

Our city is a knowledge city. We are all well aware that the higher education and research institutions in our city have a considerable impact upon the territory economy, but it is always helpful to have a recent report to put this in some perspective. The report from Deloitte Access Economics on behalf of the ANU and the University of Canberra found that the two universities, and just those two universities, directly and indirectly value-added approximately \$1.7 billion per annum to the territory economy and created or hosted 11,494 full-time equivalent jobs. With over 38,000 students and nearly 5½ thousand staff, roughly one in nine Canberrans either work or study at one of these two institutions. When you add NICTA, the CSIRO, the University of New South Wales Canberra campus, the Australian Catholic University and the Charles Sturt University into this education sector it is worth around \$3 billion per annum to the ACT economy.

As just one example of the ACT government's practical support for this sector, I introduced legislation in the last sitting to amend the University of Canberra's governing act to allow it to have a greater commercial and community presence as well as to develop its campus and provide greater educational and research opportunities. I have also signed a statement of strategic intent with the university vice-chancellor to demonstrate that our partnership will realise a cutting-edge, thriving and exciting campus for students, researchers and partner companies.

In my first update in 2013 I mentioned the success of a number of ACT-based proposals under the former Labor government's innovation precinct program. Unfortunately, the Abbott government has abolished the program, but the potential is still there for the development of major new industry precincts in the territory. These include the space and spatial industry precinct at Mount Stromlo. It is an industry with huge potential around the world, with leading advanced instrumentation and technology centres present at Mount Stromlo.

The Canberra science innovation precinct at Black Mountain and the redevelopment of the CSIRO at Black Mountain, a \$200 million redevelopment, will see the co-location of four existing sites, bringing together around 1,000 research staff into this precinct. The sporting commons and allied health precincts at Bruce, where the University of Canberra continues to develop its sports and allied health programs, are in this precinct. NICTA, which is now recognised internationally as the premier ICT research organisation, and its Canberra research laboratory are, as we know, undertaking world-leading and world-renowned ICT research activities here in the CBD. And the University of New South Wales Canberra campus, which has a major presence in the space and cyber security industries as well as very strong engineering credentials, is in this precinct. The UNSW Canberra space program will see satellites designed and built in the ACT and operating from the ACT.

All of these opportunities require investment to come to fruition and that is why one of the key pillars of our business development strategy was the formation of an enhanced and proactive investment facilitation function. Again, we have delivered. In December 2013 I launched Invest Canberra. It has already facilitated more than 100 investment leads and is currently case-managing around 20 investors that are progressing investment projects at various stages of development. Invest Canberra leads the ACT government international promotion initiatives to develop international networks and partnerships and works with stakeholders to create pathways to increase international investment into the ACT.

Invest Canberra's focus is on supporting investment and growth in the following sectors where Canberra has notable strengths, innovation and capability: defence and security investment; digital economy and e-government; health and sports sciences; innovation and higher education; space, satellite and spatial sciences; and tourism infrastructure. Invest Canberra also focuses on priority investment opportunities, including capital metro, city to the lake and our renewable energy investment projects. It also directly promotes Canberra to target investors. For example, Invest Canberra targeted tourism infrastructure and construction opportunities to international investors during Australia Week in China in April last year.

Our investment promotion activities have complemented our trade development activities. Recent research from the World Bank indicates that firms engaged in international trade are almost four times as large, twice as productive and pay six times more wages and create more jobs than non-trading, purely domestic firms. And that is why, over the last 12 months, we have organised multiple delegations to key markets, including China, Singapore and the USA. The trade delegation program is developed in close consultation with industry through our continuing connection with organisations, including the Canberra Business Chamber and other industry organisations, as well as with bilateral business councils that connect Canberra to specific target markets.

The ACT government continues to work closely with Austrade to develop trade delegation programs and to deliver in-market business matching services for Canberra companies. We supported the largest ever ACT trade delegation. That was to Singapore in June last year. In total 35 delegates, representing 28 organisations, attended that mission. Companies announcing deals and strong leads as a result of attending the Singaporean trade mission include Intelledox, E-Way, Link Digital, On-the-Go Sports, and SchoolPro.

Of course, we continue to support the development of our visitor economy. The visitor economy currently contributes \$1.8 billion to the ACT economy and is one of the territory's largest private sector employers, supporting 17,000 jobs in the city.

In December 2013 I launched the tourism 2020 strategy for the ACT. The strategy set the goal of growing the value of the visitor economy in the territory to \$2.5 billion by 2020. Based on a robust body of consumer demand research, the tourism 2020 strategy provides the foundation to inform activities that will help achieve that goal.

Investment in programs that drive interstate visitation, such as our special event fund, is critical in realising the 2020 potential. I think it is worth reflecting that since I commenced the fund—and we have invested \$2.5 million in support of seven completed major blockbuster exhibitions—that \$2.5 million investment has delivered more than \$220 million in economic value to the territory.

Through Visit Canberra we have invested in innovative and award-winning campaigns, such as the human brochure, which have enabled more than 60 Canberra tourism businesses to showcase their experiences of this city to millions of people. Our hotel occupancy trends have remained very strong and investment in new infrastructure, particularly in the hotel sector, shows the confident and bold approach of our hospitality sector in Canberra.

It is easy to be a naysayer in difficult times, and the current federal government's policies have clearly caused uncertainty and contributed to a lack of confidence among some sectors. There will always be an impact. But I believe that strong, positive action—in this case, through the government's business development strategy—can minimise this impact and can allow us to stand on our own two feet as a community and as an economy.

So the government I lead has a world-leading approach to innovation, has made significant investments into Invest Canberra to attract growth, will continue to grow innovative companies that are making a mark nationally and internationally, will work closely with our world-leading higher education and research institutions to significantly grow this sector, to attract national and international students to Canberra, and build on our strengths to further grow our tourism industry. Because of these strategies, we are a much stronger economy than we were 13 years ago. We are much more capable of weathering any storm the federal Liberal government unleashes upon us.

Whilst we have achieved all of the goals that we set ourselves, there is of course always more to be done. And so in the next few months I will be releasing the next phase of our business development strategy that will set new actions and goals. My government is building the right business environment, attracting new investment to Canberra, building on our education sector's strengths, promoting our exporting companies in overseas markets and driving the development of innovative companies and new entrepreneurs.

We cannot stand still. We cannot hope that everything will fall into place. But I know that we Canberrans should be driving this change to ensure that our city becomes even stronger in the coming decades. Every Canberra family knows this is a great place to raise kids, to live and to work. My government is taking action now to ensure that these same Canberra kids can have Australia's best jobs and best lifestyle right here in this city.

I present the following papers:

Growth, Diversification and Jobs—A Business Development Strategy for the ACT—

Implementation Report to the Legislative Assembly—Ministerial statement, 17 March 2015.

2015 Implementation Report.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the papers.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.34): This ministerial statement presented today is interesting. It is a document that was launched in August 2012 and reported on a year later, in September 2013. It seems a long time between then and now for the government to accumulate the sorts of things they want to put into a statement to prove they are doing something.

The minister quotes facts and the minister tells a reasonable story. But what he does not go to is the true state of business in the ACT, as evidenced in three recent reports: the *State of the states* report, where the economy dropped from one to eight—and it is now back up to six; the Sensis report, which saw a 42 per cent drop in business confidence in the policies of this government; and a couple of tourism reports that have come out recently where, on just about every indicator, against the trend around the country, tourism dollar values have dropped in the territory. This is the work of this government.

They are the things that this minister refuses to acknowledge. They are the facts that this Chief Minister did not put on the table today. You would question why that is so. It is because the government do not get business as they claim to. It was interesting. There was a lot of “I”, “me” and “I will” in the speech, rather than what the business community is telling him. For instance, he has not listened to their advice on planning.

The business community are scratching their heads. Due to the need for the government to get their planning reforms through, the government is willing to pass legislation to allow projects like light rail, development at UC and Mr Fluffy housing to have special consideration. If it is that hard for the government to get their projects through their planning regulations, perhaps they should change the regulations for everyone so that there is a level playing field out there. That is the problem with the government: they are only interested in themselves.

In respect of the minister’s interest in reform, he makes the point: “We are leveraging on our land advantage and infrastructure to transform Canberra into a dynamic, creative city of the future that is the preferred location for people to work, live and visit.” I hear and see lots of adjectives, but I do not actually see the action to back that up.

It is interesting to note the situation on leveraging our land advantage. Our land advantage, as far as the government are concerned, is to sell another block of land to

balance their budget because they continually overspend. We used to have a land advantage, Madam Speaker, perhaps when you and I first moved here, when a young family starting out could get a block very cheaply. The blocks used to go for \$500 in Woden back in the late 60s and early 70s. Land was actually used to get people to come here, because it was so much cheaper than in places like Sydney and Melbourne.

Let us face it: you are now paying Sydney prices for a leasehold block here. What we are not getting is the advantage. There is no competition. In fact, there is probably a competitive disadvantage. Remember the old UDIA report, the Urban Design Institute report. It said that housing affordability should be so much better in Canberra because the government controls both land and the planning regime. Yet we went from a good place in 2000 to the very bad place that we all know of now.

So there we have it. These are the bits that the minister forgets to put into his report. We actually do have a government that is addicted to land sales. We have got a land-based economy and a land-based government, and that is the problem. A dog is a dog, Madam Speaker. This Chief Minister's report is a dog. He states in his report that we cannot rely on the federal government to support our wider city, but just a few years ago, on 21 February 2013, he stated this:

I do not mind where that employment comes from ... regardless of whether they are in the public sector or the private sector ... We will continue to pursue a set of tax policies that encourage private sector employment growth ...

The Chief Minister's report is really just filled with statements of convenience. I think Robert Macklin pointed out the truth reasonably accurately in the Canberra *CityNews* last year when he said:

Andrew Barr's sudden discovery that 'recession' was looming was equally unimpressive. Bleating is not an option, Andrew.

The fact is that this minister launched this diversification strategy in 2012. It was in 2012, after coming to office in 2001. It is 11 years too late. As we know, when it was launched it was rebranding, renaming and relaunching things that in the main had been gutted when the minister first came to cabinet in 2006, when they decimated business support in this city. They cut things like tourism funding by a quarter and they got rid of all the programs that he has now conveniently claimed to have launched, when really most of them were in existence then. There is nothing new in this strategy. There was nothing new in his first report in September 2013. There is nothing new in today's report.

There is one legacy that this mob in government has and that is the Costello review and the gutting of business support in our city. It is interesting that we are yet to see the Costello review. The legacy that this mob in government has is high taxes, higher charges, more red tape and more regulation. We all know that. Despite the words that they are going to look at cutting red tape and reducing taxes, most businesses know that this is not happening. Indeed, he went as far as to say last year, when he antagonised the local business community: "The private sector are not exactly stepping up to the plate at the moment, making large investments. Although we are

seeking that, we are going overseas for that because we don't think we're going to get that locally."

Indeed, there are a number of local businesses who are not working in the ACT at the moment because they tell me that, with the tax regime, the planning regulations and the business regulations that this government has, it is just too hard. What he claims as the government's win is really riding on organisations that have succeeded regardless of the ACT Labor government.

I think that is a bitter pill that Mr Barr needs to swallow in this chamber as the ACT's most ineffectual business minister in the history of his party's tenure in government. He certainly delivers the best reports, but I think the record shows that he has been our worst business minister ever. In fact, even the government's highest profile initiative today, the light rail project, goes to the Deputy Chief Minister. We all know where the Chief Minister stands on this. The truth is that he will go down as the Rodney Dangerfield of this Assembly; he just cannot get any respect. He certainly did not get it from Ms Burch with the \$50 poker machine limits.

The truth is that business confidence is at an all-time low. The recent Sensis index from December 2014 reported that the ACT is rated the least confident state amongst small and medium enterprises. Although small and medium enterprises' attitudes towards the federal government decreased by 11 points, confidence in the ACT government's policies plummeted by 42 points—a plus 32 to a minus 10.

It is no coincidence that in the recent half-yearly report the government reported a 137 per cent increase in compliance revenue from its new payroll tax and land tax changes. But more needs to be done in our economy. We certainly know that the territory's budget deficit has blown out from \$332.8 million to \$770.5 million, and not all of it is due to Mr Fluffy. The territory's deficit surpasses the deficit of all other jurisdictions except Western Australia. But on a per capita basis it is over four times that of Western Australia. The territory will not reach the government's promised surplus now until 2017-18. It was originally planned to be achieved by 2015-16. Like with Wayne Swan, it just keeps drifting further and further out.

During the period between the 2014-15 ACT budget and the recent budget review, government expenses increased by approximately \$467.8 million. During the period between the 2014-15 ACT budget and the budget review, the government's net debt increased by approximately 29.5 per cent. During the period between the 2014-15 ACT budget and the recent budget review, government net liabilities also increased by approximately 12.5 per cent.

This government continues to slug residents and businesses with increased taxes, anticipating an increase of over \$7 million in taxation revenue from the 2014-15 original budget estimates. We all know that rates are well on their way to tripling as every year taxpayers and businesses are slugged with increased rates to fund this government. The territory's deficit for 2015-16 is approximately \$215 million, which is \$118 million worse than previously forecast. The truth is that this report is covering an important point: the government is spending too much and leaning ever more on businesses to pick up the tab.

We have often characterised Mr Barr and his government as spending like drunken sailors. However, reflecting on that through the years, the government are not drunken sailors. Sailors at least serve their country. In this context, they spend their own money; but not this government. As we have said before, there is nothing really new in this. It is just rebadged; it is just renamed. It is just the same old tired government that is not doing enough to support business in the ACT.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.43): As the Chief Minister stated earlier, “Growth, diversification and jobs: a business development strategy for the ACT” has successfully implemented all 26 actions set out in the strategy. The strategy is an articulation of this government’s economic priorities of innovation, urban renewal and embracing our digital future in our private and community sectors. But, above all, it is about jobs—a key priority for this government.

I would like to talk about some of the achievements that are a direct outcome of the business development strategy, starting with the GRIFFIN accelerator program. This program, as mentioned earlier by the Chief Minister, is funded by mentors and investors who are prepared to support and work with selected companies. These mentors between them contributed \$175,000 to a trust fund to invest in selected companies.

The first program focused on products and scalable services where government was the end customer. Following a rigorous selection process, with over 40 applicants and due diligence carried out on seven companies, five were selected to participate in the program. Each company received a \$25,000 investment from the trust fund in return for 10 per cent equity in the company. The companies undertook an intensive three-month program with a dedicated mentor to prepare them for growth and further investment.

The beauty of this model is that the mentors have a strong interest in ensuring that the company is successful because it is their money that is on the line. Of the five companies selected for the accelerator program in 2014, three had been Innovation Connect grant recipients: Enabled Employment, Made for Me and Quizling. Following completion of the program, all five companies received investment offers from investors in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Enabled Employment, which connects experienced and capable people with a disability to employment opportunities, has over 1,000 employees and 60 employers on its books. It is rapidly turning these connections into filled positions for people with a disability—an outstanding social achievement.

Made for Me and Quizling were selected from over 400 companies to present to the Sydney Angels group in November. Quizling has further developed its smart quiz product and is putting this into schools and high profile museums to enhance learning and engagement. Made for Me has established Australia’s biggest network of 3D printers and is in talks with a lead investor. These three companies are close to finalising investment deals totalling around \$1 million. Symberra and Snapknock have both further developed their product and are making excellent progress. Overall, this

is an incredible set of outcomes for businesses at such a highly risky and challenging stage.

Another excellent case study of the business development strategy is Lithicon. Early last year Lithicon, an ANU spin-out, was sold to US company FEI for \$US76 million. Lithicon's technology platform produces digital 3D images and simulations of fluids in rock samples, giving companies crucial information to help them work out the best way to extract oil and gas. The sale returned \$11 million directly to the ANU, plus an ongoing licensing stream, as well as funds to other investors, such as the Canberra business development fund and Australian Capital Ventures Ltd.

In the early days of its commercialisation process, Lithicon was a recipient of ACT government grant funding, which led to further funding from ANU Connect Ventures and the Canberra business development fund. Lithicon is a great example of how a small early investment can bring much larger rewards.

Despite the difficulties caused to our economy by the actions of the federal government, we continue to be one of the best performing regions in Australia and, as a result, the world's most livable city. But we are not relaxing, in a mistaken belief that the job is done; we are getting on with it to make Canberra an even better place for businesses to operate. Through the regulatory reform panel and other industry representative bodies, we are working to identify regulations that impose unnecessary burdens, costs or disadvantages on business activity within the territory. In the last budget the government increased the payroll tax threshold to \$1.85 million. As a result, another 150 businesses no longer need to pay payroll tax. The ACT's payroll tax system is by far the friendliest to small business in Australia.

As government resources are limited, it is important that we support those businesses that can make the biggest contribution to growing our economy. Our investment in the CBR Innovation Network is a demonstration of our commitment to this goal. We are very pleased that five institutions have made a commitment to work with us through the CBR Innovation Network to accelerate innovation in the ACT.

But the innovation network is only about research institutions and not about broad business innovation. The reason the national institutions have agreed to be foundation members of the network is that they understand that if they are to succeed in their commercialisation goals they need the whole innovation ecosystem to support them. A spin-out from the ANU or the University of Canberra, for example, is more likely to be successful if the innovation environment is supportive. These research institutions understand that they cannot operate in a vacuum.

Many of Canberra's leading companies use digital technology as the source of their competitive position. For example, EOS relies on digital technology for its laser tracking of space junk. Other export award winners, such as Intelledox and Seeing Machines, have businesses built around the innovative application of digital technology. The majority of new companies going through Innovation Connect, Entry 29 and other programs such as the discovery translation fund have digital technology at their competitive core.

The establishment of Invest Canberra is strengthening the value proposition for investment in Canberra from several core markets, including Singapore, China and the USA. Its ongoing engagement with key stakeholders ensures a strong pipeline of investment leads. For example, last year Invest Canberra joined with National Australia Bank to hold a roundtable in Hong Kong at which the former Chief Minister was the keynote presenter. The roundtable was an opportunity to advise NAB's Asian clients of investment opportunities in the ACT. These campaigns have resulted in follow-up visits to Canberra by investors to better understand our investment value proposition and the opportunities here.

Recently a research report by Ray White confirmed that these efforts are yielding results and that international investment in Canberra is growing and contributing to retaining jobs and creating demand in the construction sector. The Singapore trade delegation delivered on a number of objectives, including investment promotion; facilitation of trade for ACT businesses who attended—for example, through participation in CommunicAsia 2014, one of the world's largest IT trade shows—advancing the case for direct flights to Canberra; supporting tourism relationships; and studying relevant Singaporean infrastructure projects.

In addition, the government continues its strong support for individual companies to undertake their own international market development activities, like participating in international trade shows or establishing overseas offices. This support is critical as the current business environment is challenging for small businesses.

Our increased international efforts to create export opportunities for Canberra and our export development support programs are increasing the number of companies that can extend their entrepreneurship overseas and that can venture out in the early stages of international business development.

Some of the notable successes coming out of the ACT include Intelledox, who recently won two ACT export awards and announced a major partnership with the global entity Fuji Xerox during the Singapore trade mission. Intelledox has also built a strong export market in the USA and is investigating opportunities in the Middle East and South America.

ONTHEGO, another winner at this year's export awards, also announced in Singapore a major deal to sell custom-made sports apparel uniforms to Anytime Fitness Asia, and they are also exporting to the USA. Datapod has completed its first sale into the North American public sector market, with the purchase of one of its unique modular data centres for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. Datapod's growing list of clients includes the CSIRO, BHP Billiton, Saab Technologies, Papua New Guinea maritime and the Australian federal government.

Seeing Machines, this year's ACT exporter of the year, has recently opened an office in California and has contracts in Latin America. It is also partnering with Toshiba to develop new uses for its technology.

WildBear, formally Bearcage Productions, has developed strong partnerships with a leading Chinese TV company and is collaborating on the production of documentaries. It is also developing relationships in Singapore with documentary producers and cultural institutions.

Inland Trading has signed a major deal with Singapore Airlines to supply high-end Australian wines for the airline's business class offerings. Finally, Electro Optics Systems announced in August a joint partnership with Lockheed Martin to provide space tracking services to the international space industry.

Despite the impact of the federal government's policies on our economy, the ACT government has successfully implemented the business development strategy to minimise this impact. The strategy has built on our strengths and improved growth.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.53): The business development strategy discussed by the Chief Minister this morning demonstrates the depth and breadth of Labor's commitment to business in Canberra. It is about jobs; it is about diversifying our local economy; it is about strengthening Canberra. That is in stark contrast to Liberal policy in this area. I hear about the effects of that policy when I am out doorknocking in my electorate in Belconnen—that is, the Liberal government plan to rip 4,000 workers out of Belconnen, disrupt their families and hit local businesses hard by moving the department of immigration out of the Belconnen town centre.

You know as well as I do, Madam Speaker, that Immigration has been a major employer in Belconnen for over 30 years. Moving Immigration out of Belconnen to put the staff of the new super Department of Immigration and Border Protection all in one place could cost millions. The whole department could be broken up in the next federal reshuffle and the move will have been pointless but will have caused unnecessary harm to small business in my electorate and had a major impact on traffic congestion across Canberra as people have to suddenly travel across town to work. I say the Liberal Party should stop treating the public service as their plaything.

We got some more insight into that Liberal thinking during debate on a motion in this chamber on 11 February when Mr Hanson urged me to go quietly and not to be a passionate advocate for small business in my electorate. He said, "Don't make them angry. Don't make those federal Liberals angry." What are they, Madam Speaker? The Hulk? "Don't make them angry." Is this an indicator of sound administration? Is this an indicator of good policy? When does good government start?

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Domestic violence Ministerial statement

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.56), by leave: I rise this morning to advise members of the Assembly about programs and initiatives in place in the ACT to address and respond to domestic and family violence.

Domestic and family violence does not discriminate. It has a significant and lasting impact on all sectors of the community. This violence claims the lives of more than a hundred people, many women, in Australia every year and causes enduring damage to individuals and to society as a whole.

Right here in the ACT we received a painful and confronting reminder of the impact of family violence with the tragic death of Tara Costigan. As a community and in economic terms we measure the cost of domestic and family violence in the billions of dollars. Violence against women costs Australia \$13.6 billion each year. This figure is spread across our society and economy and includes health costs, pain and suffering, loss of productivity due to absences from work, and law enforcement and court systems costs, to name but a few. I am sure every member in this place will agree that there is no greater cost, though, than when a family suffers the loss of a loved one, or a child loses a parent through such violence.

Effective responses to this form of violence require a whole-of-government response and widespread community engagement. Everyone in the community can play a role in addressing this violence by speaking out and working towards a culture that is safe, respectful and just. Accordingly, a strong and ongoing commitment to ending domestic and family violence continues to be needed. Only a whole-of-government and a whole-of-community responsibility approach will bring about an end to this form of violence.

As a nation, Australia is signatory to several international agreements that relate to addressing the issue of violence against women, including domestic and family violence. The obligations outlined in these international agreements have shaped Australia's responses to domestic violence and have led to the development of the 12-year national plan to reduce violence against women and their children, which informs approaches to domestic and family violence across the commonwealth, states and territories.

Here in the ACT we currently support more than 20 initiatives, agencies and programs designed to help prevent instances of domestic violence, to support victims and to educate offenders. A number of these agencies work together to coordinate the government's efforts to address domestic violence issues in the community and undertake critical and difficult work dealing with all aspects of family violence. Notable amongst these is the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. It stands at the coalface of many of these efforts. The service promotes the safety of people subjected to violence and works to leave the responsibility for violence and abuse with its perpetrator. The DVCS is often a first point of contact for victims of domestic violence and their families, and I want to place on the record the government's thanks to the DVCS and all of its staff for the complex and often taxing work they do each and every day.

Part of this work is undertaken under a memorandum of agreement with ACT Policing that supports the family violence incident review mechanism. This system of review has been developed in recent years and gives feedback to both agencies about the ways in which incidents can be more effectively handled in the future. It ensures

that critical lessons learnt on the front line when dealing with domestic and family violence are not ignored or forgotten.

There is also the work of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, which was established under the Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986. It is the ACT ministerial advisory body responsible for providing advice to me on issues relating to domestic and family violence. In 2015 the council's strategic plan aims to generate a sense of community awareness and involvement in the prevention of all forms of violence within intimate and family relationships in the ACT. This is to be achieved through encouraging and facilitating early intervention strategies aimed at the prevention of domestic violence, a coordinated government, community and criminal justice response to domestic violence, and measures that reduce recidivism and the opportunities for reoffending. The council's activities have been aligned with the national plan, which is focused on stopping violence before it occurs, supporting women who have experienced violence, stopping men from committing violence and building the evidence base to reduce domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

To progress the national aims, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council is also undertaking a review of domestic and family violence deaths in the ACT. The death review is an important opportunity to provide a clearer picture of domestic and family violence in the ACT. It aims to provide a robust and independent picture of domestic and family violence in our community, to inform government decisions about effective measures and to assist in identifying issues that point to legislative, policy, practice or service changes across the government and community sectors. The death review, which I referred to the Domestic Violence Prevention Council last year, is founded on the presumption that domestic violence deaths can be prevented and will be a valuable tool in informing future government decisions about how to further build on our existing responses. This review is well underway and will be completed later this year. The recommendations made by the review will, of course, be carefully considered by the government.

I also have to acknowledge the work done by the family violence intervention program, or FVIP. This is a coordinated criminal justice and community response to criminal family violence. It is a coordinated interagency response which was first recommended by the ACT Community Law Reform Committee in 1995 and it commenced in May 1998. Since its inception, the FVIP has been recognised by the Australian violence prevention awards on three separate occasions. In accepting the law reform committee's recommendation for the establishment of the FVIP in 1996, one of my predecessors, Attorney-General Gary Humphries, spoke about the FVIP's philosophical underpinnings. He described the model known, as the Duluth model, as referring:

... to a comprehensive, collaborative interagency approach involving interlocking agency procedures, case flow monitoring, feedback and information sharing, with the response being monitored by an independent coordinating body. It operates in a legislative and procedural environment by establishing explicit procedures which prioritise safety for victims above all other concerns and operates to encourage agencies to take the most effective actions possible at all levels of the justice system.

Nothing speaks stronger of the bipartisan commitment to addressing domestic and family violence in the ACT than this now 17-year commitment to the family violence intervention program. The FVIP includes members from ACT Policing, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Office of the DPP, Corrective Services, the Victims of Crime Coordinator, ACT Legal Aid, ACT Health, the Community Services Directorate and the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. In 2012 the Australian Institute of Criminology reported on the FVIP, noting there was evidence that it is effective in establishing relationships between agencies and ensuring they work cooperatively together on family violence. The FVIP's memorandum of agreement was remade only last year in response to a recommendation from the Institute of Criminology.

Another key part of the FVIP is the ACT courts and tribunal administration, given their important role in the issuing of domestic violence orders. These orders are an important civil avenue for women's safety, and in 2013 the courts issued over 1,000 interim or final domestic violence orders. In many cases applicants were supported by legal and community services.

In addition, it is worth highlighting work that is now underway to progress a number of reforms in the area of domestic and family violence and sexual assault laws. These reforms will consider recommendations made by a range of stakeholders, including ACT Policing and the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as the recommendations made in a joint Law Reform Commission report on family violence.

In November 2010 the New South Wales and the Australian law reform commissions jointly published a report entitled *Family Violence—A National Legal Response*, which contained 186 recommendations. Of these, 131 are relevant specifically to state or territory jurisdictions. The recommendations also included a review of the laws regarding sexual assault offences and victims. The ALRC review included recommendations that aim to improve understanding of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, strengthen the operation of domestic violence orders, link state and territory laws with the Family Law Act and consider how women and children can be better protected by the law, courts and police when faced with domestic and family violence or sexual assault.

The ACT conducted five extensive consultations of the 131 state and territory recommendations. Five roundtable discussions were held and gave a broad range of stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the recommendations. To date, the response by stakeholders to the report, through the roundtables, has been positive and encouraging. The government is now considering ways in which the proposed reforms can be implemented to further ensure that perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account. I am committed to progressing this work, in close consultation with stakeholders, to make sure the reforms fit in the ACT context, and I expect the government will be in a position to make further announcements later this year about a package of reforms to be progressed in the first part of 2016.

I also note that reviews in other jurisdictions have occurred since the publication of the ALRC's report and these may also inform future responses in this place. In

particular, it is worth highlighting the Queensland special task force on domestic and family violence, headed up by the Hon Quentin Bryce, former Governor-General. There is also a national review underway to allow domestic violence orders to be recognised across all state and territory borders. This work recognises that too often women who move to another state or territory in an effort to escape violence face unnecessary administrative barriers to safety. The aim of a national domestic violence order scheme is to reduce threats to women and children escaping domestic violence by removing state and territory borders when it comes to the application of these domestic violence orders.

In addition to programs, initiatives and legislation, the ACT government has been able to apply confiscated criminal assets to a series of women's safety initiatives since 2009. The confiscated assets trust fund is established by the Confiscation of Criminal Assets Act 2003. Criminal assets funding has been provided to agencies, including the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, Legal Aid ACT and the Women's Legal Centre. The distribution of funds helps to resource important programs to aid victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence. Last week I announced approval of an additional \$300,000 from the confiscated assets trust fund for a number of purposes aimed at addressing domestic and family violence in the ACT.

I approved \$100,000 for the Domestic Violence Project Coordinator to develop an ACT domestic and family violence data framework. The development of a data framework is a priority of the family violence intervention program and the Domestic Violence Prevention Council. It is proposed the framework will be developed to build on the development by the Australian Bureau of Statistics of a conceptual framework for domestic and family violence. The funding will allow a for project officer to progress this work and for the FVIP to engage the Australian Institute of Criminology on its development.

I have also approved \$100,000 for the Domestic Violence Prevention Council to expand its capacity to carry out its functions under the Domestic Violence Agencies Act. The council has taken on a significant program of work, and this funding will allow the council to be appropriately supported, as it is made up of volunteers, to expand and implement its priorities and programs.

Finally, \$100,000 has been approved for a grants process for activities or projects aligned with the ACT's prevention of violence against women and children strategy. In addition to the use of funds under the confiscated assets trust fund arrangements, the ACT government has allocated over \$5.5 million in the 2014-15 financial year to a range of domestic and family violence and sexual assault support programs, including to Beryl Women Inc. for providing therapeutic support and safe housing to women and children escaping domestic and family violence, and the Canberra Men's Centre, which provides a range of services to men with complex needs, including perpetrators of family violence. The Canberra Men's Centre also recently ran a program called "Working with the man", which involves victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, with a particular focus on long-term behavioural changes in men who have been violent towards women.

Funding has also gone to: Victim Support ACT, which provides counselling, court support and advocacy services to victims of crime, including those who are victims of family violence; and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, which aims to promote the safety of people subject to domestic violence and operates within a human rights and social justice framework to provide crisis intervention and address the problem of violence and abuse in relationships. The service was recently funded with an additional \$40,000 to deliver the partner contact support component of the domestic abuse program which is expected to be rolled out in the coming months.

There has been funding for: ACT Policing and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service for the domestic violence incident review mechanism which is in place and allows for both services to jointly review all instances of domestic violence and respond to areas requiring improvement or medical action; the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, which provides a crisis counselling line, Indigenous community support, counselling to victims and their families, and community education programs; and, finally, to the ACT Legal Aid Domestic Violence and Protection Order Unit, which provides advice on the process for applying for an order, assistance with submitting an application and representation in court.

As you can see, Madam Deputy Speaker, the government funds a comprehensive range of services and programs to address and tackle the problem of domestic and family violence in our community. Today I am also pleased to advise members that the government will be implementing changes to the victims of crime financial assistance scheme to better respond to the needs of those in our community who experience family violence. The new scheme will be a more accessible and user-friendly means for all victims of violent crime. Applicants will no longer have to lodge complex court forms or appear in court for out-of-time applications. Instead, the Victims of Crime Commissioner will be administering the new scheme, and this will provide holistic case management for applicants, to ensure all applicants are supported in the making of the application.

The new scheme will provide assistance when victims need it, without having to go through a complex and lengthy court process. Victims of family violence will be eligible for specific expenses that they incur or may require immediately after a crime for the purposes of promoting recovery, preventing further harm and minimising further threats to safety. The types of urgent assistance victims of family violence will be eligible for include emergency accommodation, relocation costs, installation of security measures and emergency medical costs. Urgent payments will be assessed on an abridged application process in much shorter time frames than currently apply.

Significantly, the government has also given its policy agreement to broaden the scope of eligibility for victims of family violence. This means that those who experience intimidation and harassment will become eligible. No longer does someone have to wait until there is a physical act of violence to be eligible for assistance under the scheme.

As a government we recognise that reporting matters to the police is not always the first step taken by someone who experiences violence in their own home. Research

shows that victims of family violence face significant barriers to reporting crimes to the police. To facilitate access to financial assistance, in particular services that improve safety for these victims, the new scheme will recognise reports to government agencies or health professionals instead of the police in certain circumstances.

I am very pleased this Labor government is changing support services to be more responsive to those who are experiencing family violence. However, sustainability for these support services is not possible without an ongoing commitment to funding. In December 2013 the commonwealth government announced funding cuts to the legal assistance sector. The reduction in commonwealth funding will have a significant impact on the capacity of our community legal centres within the ACT to respond to and support victims of family violence.

The community legal centres that were receiving funding from the commonwealth government included the Consumer Law Centre, which provides financial counselling advice; Canberra Community Law, previously known as the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre, which includes the Street Law outreach legal service; the Women's Legal Centre; the Aboriginal Legal Service; and the Tenants Union. All these services deal with and support victims of domestic and family violence. They are at the coalface, and they require ongoing funding to ensure support for vulnerable women facing domestic and family violence or sexual assault.

In the ACT, legal services provided through Legal Aid ACT, the Women's Legal Centre and Canberra Community Law are funded in part by the commonwealth. The commonwealth government estimates there will be a \$15 million reduction in its legal assistance funding to the states and territories over the next four years. Canberra Community Law provides a range of services to people on low incomes or facing disadvantage in Canberra and the region. In May last year, the commonwealth advised Canberra Community Law that, effective from 1 July this year, it will terminate its agreement funding of \$240,000 over four years. The agreement was initially from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2017. This amounts to a loss of \$120,000 over two years, and it will be likely to lead to increased risks for women and their children because they will no longer be able to access a specialist, safe, women only legal service that provides support to many victims of family violence.

The government are working closely with stakeholders, including the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and the Victims of Crime Commissioner, to ensure that as a government we can present the strongest possible response to domestic and family violence. We all, I believe, collectively view acts of domestic and family violence as intolerable. I am sure we all have a strong and ongoing commitment to ending domestic and family violence. But the key message from the community and from our law enforcement partners is that this is now very much a time for action. We need to continue to work together to ensure a proactive response to domestic and family violence that is targeted, long term and effective. I present the following paper:

Domestic and family violence—Ministerial statement, 17 March 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Domestic violence

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.19), by leave: I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) recognises that all forms of violence are abhorrent and that we need to work together to put an end to family and domestic violence in our community;

(2) notes:

(a) the importance of comprehensive justice and community safety responses to family and domestic violence, which claims the lives of more than 100 people in Australia every year;

(b) the ACT Government's strong commitment to responding to family and domestic violence;

(c) the ACT Government's funding of numerous services including, for this year, \$1.89 million for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and \$0.8 million for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the more recent additional commitment of \$300 000 from the Confiscated Assets Trust Fund to address family and domestic violence;

(d) that last year the Productivity Commission found a significant unmet demand for legal assistance and recommended there be a \$200 million increase in legal assistance service and funding nationally;

(e) that in the last Budget the Commonwealth announced cuts to legal assistance services supporting victims of domestic violence, including:

(i) \$80 000 to the Women's Legal Centre; and

(ii) \$60 000 to the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre; and

(f) the bipartisan approach by all State and Territory Attorneys-General to the funding cuts by the Commonwealth that are severely impacting on the ability of legal assistance organisations to deliver services to those most in need; and

(3) calls on the Federal Government to:

(a) provide States and Territories with proposed funding allocations no later than 31 March 2015;

(b) commit to no further funding cuts to Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres and the Aboriginal Legal Services;

- (c) adjust future funding to account for indexation as well as increases in population; and
- (d) continue to negotiate with States and Territories on future funding arrangements in good faith.

It is timely that the Assembly debate a resolution of this nature today. We have seen and understand all too well the tragedy and the horrific impact that domestic and family violence has on our community. It does not discriminate. It has a significant and lasting impact on all sectors. The violence claims the lives of more than 100 people every year in our country, and it causes enduring damage to many individuals within our own community. There is no greater cost, though, than when a family suffers the loss of a loved one or a child loses a parent.

The purpose of this motion today is twofold. Firstly, it restates and notes the comprehensive range of responses that, as a jurisdiction, the ACT has put in place over a prolonged period of time, across governments of both persuasions, to respond to and address the problems of family violence. It notes, for example, the ongoing funding provided to important services, such as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre. It notes the more recent commitments made by this government to fund important programs through the use of confiscated criminal assets, through the confiscated assets trust fund.

It also notes that there is significant unmet need for legal assistance in our community, particularly for those who are vulnerable and who are subject to family and domestic violence in our community. It notes that that unmet need is estimated to be around \$200 million nationally, according to the most recent Productivity Commission report into the legal assistance sector. And it puts on the record this Assembly's acknowledgement that the commonwealth has announced cuts to the legal assistance sector—the legal assistance sector that supports victims of domestic violence, including local community legal centres like the Women's Legal Centre and the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre, now known as Canberra Community Law. It also notes that across Australia attorneys-general in every state and territory have asked the commonwealth to reconsider its cuts to the legal assistance sector.

The purpose of the motion, therefore, is to recognise that these cuts in funding, to the community legal centre in particular, are going to have a detrimental impact on those who are most vulnerable—the poor, the homeless, those with illness or disability and those who face violence in their own homes. These cuts are coming at a time when we need to redouble our efforts to respond to and address the problem of domestic violence in our community.

Family violence affects people regardless of their background, income or level of education, but we know that it is particularly women who live with domestic violence and that they are more likely to experience poverty as a result of that violence.

A report prepared by the government in 2012 on detecting disadvantage in the ACT found that the ACT has one of the highest proportions of diverse suburbs—that is,

suburbs where there are high numbers of both the most and the least disadvantaged in our community. This reflects the wonderful mixing of Canberra's suburbs: we do not have suburbs which are solely low income groups; we tend to have suburbs which are both low and high income in their composition. What that means, of course, is that some of the more usual indicators of socioeconomic disadvantage used to determine funding by the commonwealth are not always effective in the ACT context. Therefore, we need to use other mechanisms to identify disadvantage and make sure funding is appropriate.

The commonwealth has unfortunately announced that there will be a \$15 million reduction in its legal assistance funding to the states and territories over the next four years. The impact on legal aid alone in 2014-15 is \$400,000. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that is a lot of grants of legal assistance to people who need legal representation or assistance in the justice system.

The Women's Legal Centre will lose an estimated \$80,000 per year in 2015-16 as a result of these cuts. A reduction in funds from payments from the ACT Law Society's statutory interest account, estimated to be about \$30,000 per year, will further compound this pressure on our community legal sector. Canberra Community Law, previously the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre, will lose \$120,000 over two years as a result of these cuts by the commonwealth. The commonwealth proposes nationally to reduce funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services by \$13.1 million. The impact on the local service of ALS is unknown at this stage, but we can be, unfortunately, fairly confident that there will be some translation through to the local Aboriginal Legal Service.

Legal Aid ACT has advised that the commonwealth legal aid funding cuts are the equivalent of at least 2½ full-time staff. The Productivity Commission's report into access to justice arrangements identified the following legal aid services in doubt following these funding changes: funding for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dispute resolution project officer, funding for half a full-time equivalent position in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client support, and funding for a help desk paralegal for a period of six to 12 months. The CEO of the Legal Aid Commission, Dr Boersig, has already advised that Legal Aid has started to implement cost-cutting measures in anticipation of the commonwealth reduction in funding.

The impact is not, as I have indicated, confined to Legal Aid ACT. The Women's Legal Centre will lose the services of about 2.8 full-time equivalent solicitors. Through the provision of direct services, as well as supervision of pro bono work, the practical impact of this reduction is about 2,200 fewer hours of legal services to vulnerable women in our community. If this was a private legal practice, the work would be to the value of over \$600,000 per annum. Here, in the Women's Legal Centre, that is the practical impact of these cuts. This has the real potential to lead to increased personal safety risks for women and their children, and the increased social isolation and marginalisation of women, particularly Indigenous women, women with a disability and women from non-English-speaking backgrounds, who will no longer be able to access specialist women-centred legal services.

Cuts to the Canberra Community Law centre will result in the loss of the organisation's social worker pilot project from 1 July this year and the loss of half a solicitor position from the end of January next year. The organisation has also made the difficult decision not to replace its senior solicitor because of uncertainty about commonwealth funding going forward.

The social worker program of the Canberra Community Law centre is an innovative project which has only been up and running for about a year. Together with a lawyer, the social worker works intensively with vulnerable clients to address complex social and emotional issues which adversely impact on the successful resolution of their legal concerns. It has led to improved legal outcomes, allowing the lawyer to focus on the legal issues and the social worker to provide the other necessary support.

These are all examples of community legal services funded by the commonwealth that are directly helping vulnerable women and children in our community. We need the funding to be retained, not cut.

Commonwealth cuts to legal services will also, unfortunately, be compounded by decisions to cut funding for the very important translator and interpreter service. Crisis services across Australia rely on translator-interpreter support when supporting non-English-speaking women, who are often more isolated and more vulnerable than others. This means that the Domestic Violence Crisis Service will be required to bear the \$20,000 bill for interpreting services; this will further erode their capacity to meet front-line services.

In my motion and in my speech today, I have focused particularly on the impacts of these cuts to community legal centres, because we can restate what we do as a community and as a government and we can restate the critical importance of working together across political lines and across a range of government and non-government sectors.

But there is a very practical message that the Assembly can send today to the commonwealth. It is that these cuts to our community legal centres are running counter to everything our communities are trying to do to respond to family and domestic violence. That is why every attorney-general across the country, regardless of their political persuasion—every single one—has written to the commonwealth attorney saying: “You need to overturn these cuts. You need to provide stability and funding to community and legal aid services. You need to recognise that dollars spent early in prevention through these services stop an escalation into more costly and difficult issues in our courts. You need to reverse these cuts because they are having a detrimental effect on the most vulnerable, including women and children in our community facing domestic violence.”

The motion today, and the action that sits at the end of it, restates the four demands explicitly made by state and territory attorneys in our recent letter to the commonwealth. It restates those terms exactly. What state and territory attorneys-general have asked for is exactly what I am asking the Assembly to support today—to come back to the states and territories with proper funding proposals early so that we

can negotiate them; to commit to no further cuts to our community legal centres, our legal aid commissions and our Aboriginal legal services; to make sure that future funding is indexed to recognise increases in population growth; and to negotiate with the states and territories in good faith.

Consistent with the discussion we have had this morning already, we need to work collaboratively on the issue of domestic and family violence. We cannot afford a situation where we have to have that discussion and see reductions in funding to those services that support the most vulnerable.

This is an important motion today and I urge members to give it their full support.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.32): I thank the minister both for his ministerial statement earlier and for the motion that he has brought before the Assembly today. I indicate that the Assembly will be supporting the motion and that we also support the intent of the statement that was made by the minister.

As I have indicated publicly over the last week or so, the opposition will be offering the government a bipartisan approach on the very important issue of domestic violence. There are many issues that the Labor Party and the Liberal Party will battle on, will fight on, will have a contest of ideas on, but the issue of domestic violence is something that we need to get together on, to make sure that we are doing everything, both in this place and in the community, to eradicate domestic violence.

Domestic violence ruins lives. We are not in a place here where we would ever seek to turn a blind eye or do anything but our utmost to combat this problem. I think that we have an opportunity because of events that have happened nationally—the appointment of the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty; the fact that it is on the COAG agenda in July; and the terribly tragic events that we have seen in the ACT in recent weeks. There is no doubt that the whole community is behind the greater push and the greater drive towards eradicating domestic violence. Certainly I think there is an opportunity to take steps forward in this area.

We need to change our approach to domestic violence. We need to do more. It is not just about a bit of resourcing here or resourcing there or changes to legislation. It is about a cultural change as well, in our whole community. This does require leadership. Certainly I applaud the government for the steps that they are taking and the steps that they have taken. I would contend there is always more that can be done, and I am sure that the government would agree that there is always more that can be done. I hope that together in this place we can make sure that that is done, because the statistics on domestic violence are horrific. And it is not just against women. Women, no doubt, form a significantly higher proportion of the victims, but it involves men as well and it involves children.

One woman dies every week from domestic violence in Australia. In New South Wales, using their statistics, 24 women were killed last year in domestic-related incidents and, of all homicides in New South Wales, 42 per cent are of a domestic nature. One woman is hospitalised every three hours across the country. They are

unacceptable figures. They are outrageous figures. And we have seen similar tragic events unfold here in the ACT.

According to Access Economics, about 1.6 million Australian women have experienced domestic violence in some form. In Australia one in three women has experienced physical violence and almost one in five has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. It can happen to anyone, and that is the point. It can be physical, it can be psychological and it can be sexual. There are many forms of this violence.

As I said, we are looking for a bipartisan approach. I certainly have had some discussions with the minister's office with regard to this, and I do not think that is new in this place. The minister quoted the previous Liberal Attorney-General. There has been a bipartisan approach in this community for a long time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as you are aware—or you may not be aware; certainly I have advised the minister's office—we will be moving a motion tomorrow calling for support for a roundtable. I hope to get support from the government for that roundtable, just as we are providing them with support today. There are members of the community involved in domestic violence prevention that I have spoken to—John Hinchey, the Victims of Crime Commissioner; Marcia Williams, the Chairperson of the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council—who support that call, and there are others that I have spoken to.

That is not to say that is the start of the conversation, nor is it the finish of that conversation. But there is no doubt that the situation right now is such that the community needs to get together in anticipation of, I hope, some significant steps forward at COAG, because there is a lot happening in this space. There is a lot that has happened since the previous roundtables that the government conducted. There have been the funding cuts that we are all disappointed by, and that the Attorney-General has alluded to. We need to fully understand the consequence of those in the community. There are legislative changes afoot in other jurisdictions—in New South Wales and in Tasmania. If I get time I will discuss some of those in more detail.

There is the significant increase in public awareness that has come about because of recent tragic events both here and interstate. And there is the increase in demand that we have seen, and that we need to anticipate. We need to fully understand the implications of that demand.

I will be moving that motion tomorrow and I hope that it will have support. I am not suggesting that it is a panacea. It is not a silver bullet. But there is nothing lost by getting people in the community to get involved in this space and to say, "Where are we at right now?" With all those changes happening and with this increased demand, with legislative changes, with it being on the COAG agenda, let us make sure that we take a really strong response to COAG so that, working together with the other states and with the federal government, we can make sure that we are taking the steps that are needed to address this particular issue.

Funding is an important part of that. There is no doubt that we have seen funding issues as pressures are imposed on all governments. We certainly do not support the

funding cuts that have been made by the federal government. Let me be categorical: we want to see that funding restored. We do not want to see funding cuts in this space. In fact, we support a funding increase. It is not a bottomless pit. We have to make sure that the funding is coordinated and that it is judicious, but we want to make sure that we see additional funding. Certainly, the roundtable would hopefully give us a view of where that funding can have its best effect.

I support the funding that was announced the other day by the government—very timely, as it was described—shortly after I had announced the need for further action and a roundtable. There is no doubt that funding is an issue when it comes to resourcing. This government, the ACT government, shut the ACT women’s referral centre. That was a very important centre.

As Mr Corbell alluded to, this is not a society where we have domestic violence isolated in a single suburb. That centre provided very important services for members of our community, particularly women who were suffering from domestic violence, and we heard from a number of them. There were 700 signatures on the petition that came to this place, and Mrs Jones moved a motion. She made a very important speech in this place and highlighted the fact that the closure of the women’s referral centre in the city meant that it became more difficult for women in the city and its surrounds to access those important services. That, by and large, involving a centre that had been open for 35 years, was a financial decision. It was a financial decision, a budgetary decision and a resourcing decision made by the ACT government.

Mrs Jones spoke very eloquently and strongly about the consequences of that decision. Certainly we heard from a number of women who had experienced domestic violence and who said how the closure of the women’s referral centre by the ACT government would impact on them.

Let us make sure, just as we say to the federal government, that we do not put budgetary pressures on our services. Let us not close down services that provide an important place for women to access support regarding domestic violence. Let us make sure that, locally, the ACT government is not guilty of the same crime, so to speak, because, as we know, that closure had a significant impact on women located near the city who were suffering from domestic violence. Mrs Jones made that point.

There are a number of people in the community that the government can speak to—I know that they do—that are engaged in this area. I would like to commend the work done by many of them—too many, probably, to list. I certainly would like to highlight the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and all of its members, led by Marcia Williams, and also, in particular, John Hinchey, the Victims of Crime Commissioner, who has been particularly strong in this area.

As we have seen from the statistics, there has been a spike in calls to the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service. The executive director has talked about that jump. That started in November. Some of the statistics are quite disturbing, to be honest. Workers have received 2,529 calls for support. They have helped in 213 crisis interventions with families and police since the start of December. They have helped 84 women apply for court protection orders against violent partners. Staff have had to

triage and prioritise clients, which often means they are only able to support families in crisis. I think that is the point: even for the services that we have locally that have been funded and run by the ACT government, it should not be suggested that those services are not equally under pressure. They dealt with 15,644 calls to the crisis line in 2013-14. That is up from 13,900 in the year before. That is a significant increase. They provided direct intervention for 1,408 people, and that is up by about 400 since 2012-13—a significant increase.

We know that emergency housing is another area of significant pressure here in the ACT. We need to make sure there is sufficient emergency housing. I know that many in the community sector have been calling for an increase in emergency housing.

The work that has been done in the ACT and the impact of the budgetary decisions in the ACT are important, but we also need to make sure that we are aware of the work that is being done nationally. This body of work has been going on for some time. I refer to the Australian Law Reform Commission report on family violence, and also to the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-22.

There are various iterations of that plan. I do not have time to go through those now, but I commend it to members of this Assembly: get on the website, have a look at that plan, the various iterations of it and the roundtables that were conducted federally, because the issues that affect families in Queanbeyan, Brisbane or WA are often very similar to the issues here. We can certainly learn from other jurisdictions and see what they are doing. If we can, wherever possible, take a national, coordinated response across the jurisdictions, that would be a very positive thing.

I would like to again thank the minister for bringing this motion forward today. I acknowledge the work this government is doing, and I will talk more about that in speaking to my motion tomorrow. I commend that work. But there is always more that can be done, and while we have this on the agenda, both locally and nationally, let us take that opportunity and work together as an Assembly and as a community to make sure we tackle the horrific issue of domestic violence head on.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.47): I begin by welcoming the Attorney-General's statement and, indeed, this motion this morning. I am very pleased to speak in support of what Minister Corbell has outlined today.

There is no doubt that domestic and family violence concerns us all and it is the case that we can no longer stand by and say, "It doesn't happen in my family; therefore there's nothing else I need to do." The door of the family home can no longer be a barrier that allows the wider community to ignore or excuse acts of violence committed behind it. This is everyone's responsibility because, ultimately, it affects us all. It has a corrosive effect on our entire community and it eats away at what our community could and should be.

In the simplest terms, it means that victims cannot reach their full potential and contribution in life. In its most extreme form, it rips away from us people who

contribute so much, as we have seen, tragically, in our own city in recent times. Unfortunately, recent events in Canberra are not isolated. Domestic and family violence does not discriminate and it does not define itself by class, by age, by race or, indeed, by sexuality. This insidious and extremely damaging violence claims the lives of more than 100 people in Australia every year and undoubtedly causes long-term effects for many more. The vast majority of victims are women and children.

The statistics are alarming. Since the age of 15, almost one in five women has experienced sexual violence, one in three has experienced physical violence and one in four has experienced emotional abuse in their lifetime. These are simply unacceptable figures in this country. It is, unfortunately, a shameful reflection of what we, the Australian community, have been previously willing to accept. But we must no longer do so.

As the attorney has outlined, the cost of family violence in our community is measured, completely inadequately, frankly, in the billions of dollars. Violence against women has been estimated to cost the Australian economy \$13.6 billion each year, derived from health costs, pain and suffering, loss of productivity, law enforcement and court costs. Without effective action, these costs, simply the economic costs, will increase to around \$16 billion by 2021.

Such figures pale into insignificance when you think of the overwhelming pain caused by losing a friend or a family member in such circumstances. Dollars do count, of course. However, having the structures and ongoing support in place to help combat domestic violence—and, as the attorney explained, reducing the incidence of domestic and family violence and effectively responding to such violence when it occurs—requires strong and ongoing commitment from both levels of government and from the community acting as a whole.

That is why it is important to be clear today that this task is not simply the task of one minister in government. Every member of this executive has a job to do to support victims, to tackle family violence at its source, to address the root causes of dysfunction and violence in our community and to deal with perpetrators in a way that minimises recidivism. Indeed, it is the job of every member of this Assembly to do what we can to address this issue. Therefore, I warmly welcome the opposition leader's commitment to a bipartisan approach.

We know that the tragic cases that have come to the attention of the police or the media in recent times are really only the tip of the iceberg. We need to ensure that victims are better able to access the help they need without official processes inadvertently making their lives harder. That is why I am also very pleased with the attorney's announcement today of a fundamental reworking of the victims of crime financial assistance scheme, to focus first and foremost on the needs of those who experience family violence.

The current scheme is outdated and puts the victim into an unnecessary round of court-based litigation to have their injuries recognised. Now, the Victims of Crime Commissioner will administer a new scheme and provide supportive case management for the applicants. As Minister Corbell outlined, victims of family

violence will be eligible for expenses that they incur or require after the crime to promote their recovery, to put safety measures in place and to prevent further harm. Time frames will be explicitly shorter so that assistance comes quickly, not months and months after the crime.

These are practical and sensible measures that the government is taking to make it clear that we stand with those who face violence in the home or from family members. You are not alone and we will do all that we can to make you safe and help you to recover. The reforms to the victims of crime scheme complement numerous services and programs already in place to protect women from domestic and family violence and to provide support to victims of such violence.

The government locally is providing \$5½ million in the current financial year towards a range of services, including the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, towards crisis responses to those experiencing domestic and family and sexual violence, and specialised accommodation and outreach services for women who are escaping domestic or family violence. Minister Corbell provided further details of these many important services in his contribution, and the fact is that these programs are making a vital difference in our community every day.

Last week the government announced an additional \$300,000 in funding to combat domestic violence, which comes, as we have heard, from the confiscated assets trust and will be used for the development of an ACT domestic violence data framework, women's safety grants and extra funding for the Domestic Violence Prevention Council to expand and progress its works program. This is another practical expression of what the territory government can do to support those working at the coalface to counter family violence. Recent incidents of such violence only reaffirm the critical nature of responding clearly and unequivocally.

At such a time I only wish to note that the commonwealth's funding cuts to important services such as the Women's Legal Centre and the domestic violence crisis translation interpreter services are fundamentally counterproductive. These services provide critical support to women trying to escape domestic violence, so this funding reduction is simply at odds with recent statements by the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet that they consider countering domestic violence a priority. Women from different cultural backgrounds who speak languages other than English at home and who are trapped in troubled or violent marriages will be particularly affected by cuts to interpreter services.

On 28 January this year the Prime Minister announced the formation of a national advisory panel on violence against women. The panel will provide advice to the Council of Australian Governments on violence against women and their children, including domestic and family violence and sexual assault. The panel will focus on practical solutions and three priority areas in 2015. The panel will have nine members from across jurisdictions. The founding chair is former Victorian police commissioner Mr Ken Lay APM, and the founding member is, of course, the Australian of the Year, Ms Rosie Batty.

The ACT government stands willing and able to assist the commonwealth in raising awareness, encouraging victims to seek help and promoting respectful behaviour. That is why we have agreed to co-fund a \$30 million national awareness campaign, together with the commonwealth government, the other states and the Northern Territory.

I make the point here this morning that raising awareness about what services victims can turn to will only be effective if these same services are properly and sustainably funded.

The ACT has strong domestic violence laws and supports the development and implementation of a framework so that DVOs can operate nationally. Currently there is no national scheme in place to seamlessly enforce domestic violence orders across states. For instance, when a woman from Canberra moves interstate, she would not enjoy automatic protection from the perpetrator through a DVO issued in the territory. *(Time expired.)*

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (11.57): I rise this morning to share the concern of my colleagues in the territory about the prevalence of domestic or family violence in this country and the impact that it has on so many people in our community.

In preparing for today's discussion I went to the website for the "What Can You Do?" campaign, which is being put together by some of Canberra's most prominent organisations in this area—the Women's Centre for Health Matters, the Rape Crisis Centre, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Women's Legal Centre. They provide an excellent summary and insight into some of the definitional issues and also the scale of the problem we face. They talk about the fact that domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have or have had an intimate relationship.

While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear—for example, by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. They note that domestic violence is not a one-off violent attack; it is about power and control and involves deliberate and long-term violence—abusive or intimidating behaviour which aims to control every part of a partner's life. It takes many forms, such as physical violence, sexual abuse, financial control, constant criticism, isolation from family and friends, stalking and other kinds of harassment. These are behaviours that many of us would not have observed, if we are fortunate, but, as Mr Hanson has outlined in citing quite a few of the statistics, they are unfortunately way too prevalent in our community—unacceptably so.

The figures are startling. I think it is incomprehensible when we look at figures such as one in three women over the age of 15 reporting having experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. That means that we know those people; we know somebody in our circle of friends, within our family, within our community or within our workplace who has experienced that violence. That is both a confronting and an unacceptable thought to have.

According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, the majority of family homicides occur between intimate partners, and the majority of partner homicides involve males killing their female partners. They note that the most dangerous place for a woman to be in regard to violence and murder is in her own home and with her own intimate partner. Again, it is an absolute breach of trust and an absolute travesty, in the sense that one should feel secure in their own home and yet, unfortunately, that is the place a woman is most likely to experience violence or murder.

The campaign website that I refer to speaks a lot about what men can do and what we can do as a community. I will not cite the entire website, but I think that what comes through that, most importantly, is the notion that we as a community can play an important role. There are many ways to do that. Today in the Assembly we are particularly discussing the role that governments can play through the provision of services, legal support and a range of other things.

But the message that comes through—through this community campaign and, very strongly, through the White Ribbon campaign, in which I know Minister Gentleman has played a strong role and for which I and other members in this place have been ambassadors; it has been a very effective awareness-raising campaign—is that we all have a role to play. That applies to men in particular, of course, because most of this violence is perpetrated by men, but each of us has a role to play, particularly in speaking out about these issues but also, most importantly, in not turning a blind eye and in putting out a hand to help if we think that we are aware of somebody who is experiencing some form of domestic violence. That can be a very challenging thing to do, but it is a duty that does rest upon each of us—to not turn a blind eye. It is that turning of a blind eye—turning away, failing to speak out—that allows domestic violence to continue. In speaking out against it and in taking action and not turning that blind eye, each of us has the potential to play a role in bringing that cycle of violence to an end.

I turn to the motion that Minister Corbell has brought forward today. He has spoken to it in some detail. It spells out the importance of a comprehensive government response, underlines what a significant issue this is in our community and talks through some of the issues. I particularly turn to the section that calls on the federal government. There is no doubt that the community legal centres play an incredibly important role. Today there has been quite some discussion of the role that they play; they are incredible resources in our community.

Certainly the ACT Women's Legal Centre is key to assisting vulnerable women in the Canberra community who are not able to access appropriate assistance elsewhere. It is a small but highly specialised organisation; its staff are experts in the gender-specific issues that impact women's access to justice, including domestic and sexual violence, and it is a first point of contact for some vulnerable women. The latest statistics that I have received from the Women's Legal Centre—I met with their director in recent weeks—include that it helps around 1,200 clients per year and that approximately two-thirds of the centre's family law clients report being directly affected by domestic violence. I think all members will agree that that is a disturbing statistic and that the

role played by the Women's Legal Centre and by other community legal centres in the territory is critically important.

The community legal centres—which also include Street Law, Canberra Community Law, the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Environmental Defender's Office—are an incredibly efficient way to use limited funding for legal services, as their front-line delivery and advocacy save costs further down the line. A recent independent economic cost-benefit analysis commissioned by the National Association of Community Legal Centres determined that every dollar the government spends on community legal centres returns \$18 of economic benefits accrued to society. These include financial, social and health benefits as well as removing pressure on the court system. Like other community legal centres, the Women's Legal Centre is a cost-effective provider of legal services. Its own analysis of its finances and services is that it provides almost a sevenfold return on investment.

As the motion outlines, the Women's Legal Centre and other important community legal services are having their federal funding cut. This will result in a reduction in staff and a reduction in services, possibly even closure of these incredibly valuable services. This is an issue right across the country, and it is being discussed today. I know the local Women's Legal Centre will do their best to maintain their services, but these sorts of cuts are really putting pressure on them. The consequences will flow directly through to the most vulnerable in the community—women affected by domestic violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, homeless people, people who are struggling with their finances. Fewer people in the ACT community will be able to be seen and helped by the women's legal service.

There will be directly negative outcomes in our community because of these cuts by the federal government. It should be about the last area in which we seek to find savings if we are looking to change the fiscal situation; services that help the most vulnerable and do so very efficiently and cheaply should be the sorts of things we remain committed to investing in and the last thing to be targeted when it comes to finding budget savings.

It is very welcome that all of the states and territories have come together to call on the federal government to revisit this decision and commit to no further funding cuts to these services. I congratulate and thank the attorneys-general for their work in this space in collectively making this statement to the federal government and underlining the importance of the community legal centres. On that basis, I am very happy to support the motion—and the text, which I understand directly reflects the calls that the attorneys have collectively put to the federal government.

The last area I wanted to touch on today concerns corrections. As part of my role as the Minister for Justice, I have sought from Corrective Services information that I wanted to share with the Assembly about some of the ways in which Corrective Services seeks to provide support around issues of domestic and family violence. This is an area that ACT Corrective Services takes very seriously, and it has programs in place to address the rehabilitation of offenders with a history of family violence.

Of course, by the time Corrective Services comes into contact with an offender, the offence has already occurred. The role that Corrective Services seeks to play is, while acknowledging that the offence has taken place, seeking to break that cycle of violence and ensure that, when an offender is released from custody or ends the serving of some sort of non-custodial punishment or even weekend detention, they are better equipped to deal with their own behavioural issues and have help to break that cycle of violence. ACT Corrective Services operates a number of programs to address violent behaviour by offenders. In particular, there is the domestic abuse program, which also operates in New South Wales. Other programs that address violence in a more general way include the violent offenders program, the anger management program and the cognitive self-change program.

It should be noted, of course, that issues of substance abuse or mental health can also be factors in acts of family violence. There are programs and treatment available to detainees to address these issues.

ACT Corrective Services also operates a program for women in custody who have experienced domestic or family abuse as victims. It is designed to help participants identify issues around domestic and family violence as well as identify the options and supports available to them so that when they leave custody they are better equipped to avoid situations of domestic and family violence and are given tools to assist them to improve their lives and get out of that space.

ACT Corrective Services is also represented at a senior level on a number of domestic violence forums, including the Victims Advisory Board, which the Director-General of Justice and Community Safety chairs, and the Family Violence Intervention Program Coordination Committee, which was spoken about earlier today.

As we reflect on this issue and reflect on ways in which we can all play a part in helping to tackle this very serious issue, which is far too prevalent in our community, I wanted to share with members of the Assembly those pieces of work that ACT Corrective Services does.

I would like to finish by reflecting on a point that Mr Hanson made, because I think it was a good one. This is an area in which governments are doing a lot, but there is also room for continuous improvement. That is a point that we should all reflect on as we debate this matter in the Assembly, in light of the many efforts that have been made. There have been efforts from government and significant efforts from a range of important community organisations. Nonetheless, this continues to be a significant problem in our community, so we can far from rest on our laurels; we have a lot left to do. We can all play a part in seeking to reduce those terrible statistics that have been cited in today's discussion.

I look forward to continuing to discuss this issue, and I support the motion brought forward by the attorney today.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural

Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (12.10): Violence against women and children is unacceptable in any form and under any circumstances in any community. As the Minister for Women and Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality, I am entirely clear that we must do everything in our power to stop this violence.

I will always want to improve the services available to victims, but more than that I want this violence to end. We cannot claim to be a just and fully socially inclusive community while violence against women and children is a part of this city. Domestic violence remains a serious problem for our community. It has a devastating and lasting effect on women, children and families. For all women, it undermines our right to live without fear. For those who experience it directly, it undermines their health, their education and their employment prospects. It undermines their economic security and, in the most tragic of circumstances, their lives and the lives of their children.

Here in the ACT we watched and were shocked beyond belief at the recent tragic death of a mother of three young children. I, like many other Canberrans, had a deeply emotional reaction that came from putting the face of a young woman to a problem that is too often spoken about in the abstract. In the first instance I was deeply saddened by this violence. I am furious about the fear that women living in our community live with because we still have a society where some men feel a deep need to control the women in their lives. And then I was frustrated that I lived in a society where this could still happen.

But when I had conversations with the women's sector, the people I know whose lives have been the aftermath of this kind of violence, what I heard loudly and clearly was what I already knew: there is no easy solution here, and we owe women experiencing violence more than just talk. The ACT government has a renewed focus on working across government to address the impacts of domestic and family violence and remains steadfast in working to end violence itself.

What I heard when I spoke to the sector was that they wanted us to work collaboratively with the community to address the causes of violence and abuse against women because the consequences are far-reaching and affect our children, our families and our community. They did not want to attend another meeting. They wanted action on the work that they and governments around the country have been undertaking through the first phase of the national action plan. They wanted the work done to make sure that domestic and family violence and sexual assault is stopped.

It is a sad but important step forward that it is now widely understood that in Australia around one in three women has experienced physical violence and one in five has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. This is a shocking statistic: one in five women having experienced sexual violence. This is why the commonwealth, state and territory governments worked with the community to develop a 12-year national plan to reduce violence against women and their children from 2010 to 2022. The national plan sets out what we are doing to reduce violence against women and their children. It is a vision that Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities.

Over 12 years the national plan aims to achieve a significant, sustained reduction in violence against women and their children. To make this change, commonwealth, state and territory governments have agreed to work together to achieve six national outcomes, and these are: communities that are free and safe from violence; relationships that are respectful; strong Indigenous communities; services that meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence; justice responses that are effective; and perpetrators stopping their violence and being held to account.

The national plan focuses on the two types of violent crimes that have a major impact on women in Australia: domestic and family violence and sexual assault. The plan recognises that it is not a problem with individual acts of violence from individual men. It is a cultural problem that stems from the way our society values women and their contribution from the time that we are girls. The national plan focuses on stopping violence before it happens in the first place, supporting women who have experienced violence, stopping men from committing violence and building an evidence base so that we learn more about what works in reducing domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

These changes take time, which is why we will have a series of four action plans over 12 years. Each of the four action plans builds on the others over the 12 years and is designed so that we can build on what has been achieved in each three-year plan and focus on what actions will make the most difference in the future. We are now working on the second implementation plan. Over the first period, the ACT government and governments across the nation worked to understand the complexity of this issue. We saw roundtables, community forums, the beginnings of inquiries and an explosion in the available resources and current research. It is time to evaluate this issue, and I wholeheartedly support Prime Minister Abbott's decision to do this.

The ACT women's plan 2010-15 is the ACT government's strategic framework to improve the status and lives of women and girls. The Ministerial Advisory Council on Women has been having conversations around the future of this plan since July last year, and part of this plan will be about ensuring that there is a gender lens cast across all of the work that governments do and the work that needs to continue to be done. I am going to be working hard with my commonwealth, state and territory colleagues to progress the second action plan for the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children.

We have many domestic violence services but we also need a plan on how to end this violence and deal with its consequences. The ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy lays the foundation for how we, both as a government and as a community, view and respond to violence against women and children.

The second implementation plan for the ACT is currently under development and will include an increased focus on addressing domestic violence in the other initiatives of government, such as the human services blueprint and the better services initiative. This emphasises the right services, at the right time, for the right duration. And as we implement the national disability insurance strategy we will make sure that our support and investment address the safety of women and children with a disability.

Violence against women happens in many settings—at home, on the street, in public transport, in the workplace—within a range of relationships, from family members and partners to complete strangers. However, in the majority of cases we know that women know the men who are violent towards them. We know women from some communities face additional barriers to access the right services and support, and these include language barriers.

What are we as a government and a community going to do now? Last week Marcia Williams, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council chair, said we must use the sector's existing knowledge and build on it. We are a small jurisdiction. We should be able to get this right. And how true this is. This government has heard her and the community loudly and clearly. We have come together with a renewed focus on getting this complex picture right. We are in the process of examining all government programs across community services, justice, children, young people, health and education where work is currently being undertaken to address domestic violence. The success of these programs in the fight to address this complex issue will be the first matter considered by the cabinet subcommittee on social inclusion and equality.

Again, Madam Speaker, I remind you that one in three Australian women will experience some kind of physical or sexual violence at the hands of a male in her lifetime. Each one of these victims is a daughter, a sister, and sometimes a mother, a grandmother, a niece or an aunt. Each one of them is a part of our community. Each one of them has a complex need and a complex story. Every single one of them deserves the best response that our community can provide.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (12.20): I rise today to support the motion brought forward by my colleague. Domestic violence is a tragedy; it is a tragedy for the immediate victim and it is a tragedy for the victim's children, who often have to witness frightening and terrible acts of violence in the family home.

As this Assembly knows, the ACT government has recently launched a step up for our kids, a new five-year strategy for out of home care in the ACT. The strategy represents a \$16 million investment in the future of our most vulnerable children and young people. It is about breaking intergenerational cycles of abuse and neglect and keeping children and young people safe in our homes.

Under the strategy, the strengthening high risk families domain will focus on intervening early, managing risks and providing intensive in-home supports with the whole family to prevent children from entering formal care. This in-home support will enable additional support needs to be identified, including linking families to domestic violence support services and the child and family centres.

The effects of domestic violence, particularly on young children, should not be underestimated. Domestic violence is all too frequently a source of trauma reactions in children. The term “exposure to domestic violence” is an inclusive description that

covers a vast number of ways children experience violent behaviour in their own homes.

Exposure to domestic violence can result in a wide range of emotional, psychological, cognitive, social and behavioural issues for children. Children may display fear, anxiety, anger, low self-esteem, excessive worry and depression. They may be more aggressive or oppositional in their behaviour. Children who have experienced domestic violence are often particularly watchful of others because events have led them to believe that people can be dangerous. Others may have significant attachment difficulties throughout their childhood and may suffer from mental health conditions such as eating disorders or episodes of depression. In addition to these difficulties, children exposed to domestic violence may perform poorly in school, have low cognitive functioning ability and have limited problem-solving abilities. As adolescents and adults they may also come to accept and tolerate violence as a normal feature of their personal relationships.

The ACT government is well aware of the needs of the children who are exposed to trauma, including domestic violence, and therefore committed \$3.05 million from the 2013-14 budget over four years to establish a new trauma recovery program for children. This program forms an important part of our commitment to protecting children from abuse and neglect.

I was very happy to launch the opening of Melaleuca Place as one of my first duties upon becoming Minister for Children and Young People in July 2014. Melaleuca Place provides a targeted, multidisciplinary, holistic early intervention and prevention service committed to supporting children and young people to heal from the trauma they have seen and experienced, repair existing relationships and establish new supportive and protective networks. Melaleuca Place is a tangible response to the need to intervene early in order to repair damage and to give children the best chance, no matter what might have happened to them or what they might have experienced.

For the children exposed to domestic violence, the intervention is undertaken by trained professionals and the children are supported to develop their own stress reduction strategies to enhance their emotional wellbeing. They are given reassurance that what has happened to them is not their fault, and through counselling and support the child's sense of safety and security is restored.

Research has clearly established that the brain is altered following a prolonged exposure to trauma and stress. This can lead to permanent changes in the brain's structure and significant delays in a young person's development. To address the delays in children's development, the program provides interventions offered by a speech pathologist and an occupational therapist. At the moment, there are 20 children who are receiving this specialist intervention from a team of allied health professionals comprising psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, a speech pathologist and psychological workers.

All of the children presenting to Melaleuca Place have symptoms associated with trauma as a result of experiencing abuse and/or neglect that impacts on their development, emotional and psychological wellbeing. The overarching aim of the

work at Melaleuca Place is to provide a sense of stability and safety, the time and space to heal and recover from exposure to traumatic events, including those associated with domestic violence, and move towards achieving a more positive life experience.

Also, I have been an active member of White Ribbon and an ambassador since 2004, and I would like to recognise the White Ribbon ambassadors here in the chamber today and advise them that 158,000 other ambassadors have their back in this work. The White Ribbon Foundation is about men standing up to violence against women. During the time that I have worked with White Ribbon and stakeholders and the community, we have raised awareness of domestic violence and we have called on men to take action against it.

There is an important message with White Ribbon, and that is that, while we can provide many support services for families and victims, we must put effective pressure on the perpetrator. White Ribbon and the Canberra Men's Centre do just this with the working with the man program. I want to congratulate them as well as all the White Ribbon organisers and ambassadors for their ongoing work.

The effects of domestic violence are far reaching, not just for the immediate victim but also for their children. Services such as Melaleuca Place are extremely important if we are to be able to repair the damage caused by domestic violence in the lives of our children and young people. I commend the trauma recovery program and the hard work of the Community Services Directorate for the life-changing work that it does.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (12.27), in reply: I would like to thank all members for their contribution to this debate. I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his support for this motion and for his colleagues' support, and my own colleagues and Minister Rattenbury for spelling out the importance not only of stating our commitment as a government, as an Assembly, as a community in responding to the issue of domestic violence but also for unanimously stating that the impact of funding cuts by the federal government to our community legal sector, to our Legal Aid Commission, is going to have a significant impact on some of the most vulnerable in our community, some of the most isolated in our community and those women and children, in particular, who are the victims and who are suffering right now from the impacts of violence in their home, a place where they should feel or are entitled to feel the most safe.

During the debate I was reviewing a media report—and it popped up during the debate in a very timely way—that today four senior staff from a community legal centre in Broken Hill have resigned because of the uncertainty created by the commonwealth's funding cut decisions to community legal centres. It was a stark and timely reminder of the impact on community legal sectors of the commonwealth's funding cuts.

I am very pleased that across the country all state and territory attorneys have said we cannot let these cuts stand and we cannot bear them in our own budgets or via our own capacity to support responses to needs for community legal support, including

the needs of women and children facing domestic violence. I am particularly pleased today that this Assembly is supporting that call as well. It will add further support to and pressure on the commonwealth to revisit its funding decision. It is right that the Prime Minister says that domestic violence should be a national priority, but it is wrong for the federal government to then reduce funding to those services that have a direct impact on and make a direct contribution to supporting the victims of those violent crimes.

I thank members for their support today. I thank them for unanimously joining with me in making this call. I look forward to this ongoing discussion in our community.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.30 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice Government—debt

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. Treasurer, I refer to a recent Auditor-General's report on debt management, which found:

The ACT Government has not taken the opportunity to determine the best arrangements for debt management across ACT Government entities. In 2007, the then Chief Minister announced a review of debt management, but there is no evidence that it was progressed.

Why hasn't the government taken the opportunity to determine the best arrangements for debt management across ACT government entities?

MR BARR: I think various areas of the ACT government have taken some issue with elements of the Auditor-General's findings. Nonetheless, we will take that on the chin and we will respond accordingly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Right. I do not hold out much hope then, given that answer. Treasurer, what strategy does the government have to reduce our record debt and record deficit?

MR BARR: I think the Leader of the Opposition might be conflating issues of moneys owed to the territory government by debtors with the position that all Australian governments are finding themselves in, where revenue has not been growing as strongly as we would hope—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: Indeed, we note that there are a variety of increasing demands upon expenditure within the responsibilities of, in our case, both municipal and state-type functions. But to go to the issue of debt recovery, the Revenue Office in particular has been provided with additional resources in order to—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Have you got a point of order?

Mr Hanson: On a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you stop the clock, please?

Mr Hanson: The question was about reducing the ACT government's debt and deficit. It was not about debt recovery. It is not about going after debtors. It is about what he is doing with his own debt. I would ask the Treasurer to address the issue of what the government is doing to reduce its record deficits and its record debt, which was the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, if you—

Mr Corbell: Point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, it is all right, Mr Corbell. If you really want to press that issue, it was within my capacity, after I thought about it, to rule your supplementary question out of order because it did not really relate to the first question. Mr Barr was answering the question, which related to debt recovery. I think that that is possibly the space that he needs to be in.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, my original question was: "I refer to a recent Auditor-General's report on debt management." Then I talked about what the government has done with regard to arrangements for debt management across ACT government entities. So I would have thought that asking what strategies the ACT government has to manage debt is entirely in order and it is not relevant for the Chief Minister to be talking about simply—

Mr Corbell: No, you are conflating this.

Mr Hanson: No, I am quoting from the question. It is simply not relevant for the Chief Minister to be talking about debt recovery.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I have ruled on the point of order and I think that the Chief Minister is answering the question on the subject that you asked.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Obviously, there is some confusion. I understood the Auditor-General's report to be into debts owed to the territory and how our ACT government agencies are pursuing those debts. My comments in response to the initial question were that the Auditor-General has made some valid points that the

government will respond to but that there are other areas of her report that are contested by different areas of ACT government that have the responsibility for collecting debts to the territory.

The point I was making before I was interrupted by the Leader of the Opposition was that the government has provided additional resources to the Revenue Office to assist in relation to a range of compliance matters that also includes debt recovery. In relation to the territory's debt, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that the territory holds a AAA credit rating. It has the lowest levels of debt—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: of any—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: The territory has one of the lowest levels of debt of any state or territory and the government continues to budget prudently. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, how will the government address the \$1.6 billion debt held by ACTEW, as you are one of the shareholders?

MR BARR: I think it is important to note in this context that public utilities should have a level of debt and that the gearing that ACTEW has—soon to be known as Icon—is within industry benchmarks, at around 60 per cent. And that is an appropriate level of debt for a public utility to have, given the utility needs to invest in long-term infrastructure for the city. So Mr Smyth's conjecture is that this generation of taxpayers should fully fund in advance infrastructure over a hundred-year period that will be utilised over a hundred-year period. I do not accept that fundamental position.

My view, as I have stated repeatedly, is that it is appropriate for the public utility to have a level of debt and that the level of debt that ACTEW has now is appropriate and in accordance with industry standards. It will, of course, in the context of the future, not be required to undertake significant capital works programs, such as building new dams, for the foreseeable future. So its debt levels have peaked, and over time the debt levels will reduce.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! I want to hear Mr Smyth's question.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, why was there no progress in the review of debt management announced by then Chief Minister Stanhope in 2007?

MR BARR: Right; so we are back to the original element of the question. Just because you have a link word that is “debt” does not mean you can conflate two particular issues.

Mr Coe: It’s the link word for all Labor governments too, isn’t it?

Mr Hanson: “Debt” and “deficit”; you know those words well.

MR BARR: All I will say is that the federal Treasurer is having an excellent time, isn’t he, at this point, in seeking to respond to issues of debt and deficit, and in fact has been adding to it. So having regard to Mr Coe’s interjection, and indeed Mr Hanson’s interjection, perhaps they could look a little closer to home. But in relation to the issues that have been raised by the Auditor-General, the government will of course respond, and there are a number of actions underway in different areas of the territory government. I remind members of my previous answer in relation to the Revenue Office, where additional resources have been provided in recent budgets in order to assist in debt recovery.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, it was reported last week that the Western Australian government is reconsidering its MAX light rail project. The project was already on hold because of budgetary pressures, but the Western Australian government will now actively consider a bus system as a cheaper way of providing the same public transport benefit.

This situation is comparable to Canberra because, since the ACT government’s decision to favour light rail over buses, our budget deficit has increased by over \$400 million.

The Western Australian Minister for Transport, Dean Nalder, said last week that preliminary analysis prepared by his department suggested that buses could deliver the same service level but be provided for half the cost. Mr Nalder said:

This is a rational Government going through its processes and making sure that we deliver the best possible solutions for our community.

Minister, given that the ACT government’s deficit is, on a per capita basis, four times higher than Western Australia’s, why are we still proceeding with the capital metro light rail project?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Coe for his question. It is not for me to comment on the specifics of the circumstances in Western Australia; that is obviously a decision for them. However, I note that people like Professor Peter Newman, the emeritus professor of sustainability from the University of Western Australia, have strongly

criticised the decision of the Western Australian government to cancel the light rail project in the Perth CBD. People like Professor Newman, world-leading academics recognised for their expertise in the capacity of rail to transform the development of cities and communities, have put a very clear case about why the Western Australian government should continue with the development of the light rail project there in the Perth CBD.

It is also worth highlighting that in other jurisdictions around the country ongoing consideration is being given to the expansion and development of light rail networks. In the New South Wales government, my counterpart, Gladys Berejiklian, has indicated her support for the development of light rail in Newcastle. Of course, the New South Wales Liberal government is also developing light rail projects in the Sydney CBD. The new Queensland Labor government has indicated its support for consideration of possible expansion of the Gold Coast light rail project. So, clearly, there is strong momentum across Australia to develop and expand light rail projects, including in Liberal-controlled states.

Whatever the issues are in Western Australia, they are a matter for the Western Australian people and the Western Australian parliament. What we see across the country is strong levels of support to continue to develop and expand light rail projects. That is because governments are cottoning on to the transformative benefits of light rail, increasing land use density and increasing economic opportunity. Right here in Canberra, we know that our project will deliver 3½ thousand jobs to Canberrans and over a billion dollars worth of benefits to the ACT economy.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what other modes of transport had you considered for rapid transit along Northbourne Avenue and other corridors prior to committing to light rail?

MR CORBELL: Mr Coe knows the answer to that. I have answered that question a million times. I refer him to the URS report that looked at the different benefits, which was commissioned by the government back in 2012, and which concluded that overall light rail delivers the best outcome for Canberra. So that was the conclusion of that report. Mr Coe knows the answers to all of these questions because I have answered them a million times before.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, how much regard did you give to the ACT government's budgetary position when you decided to proceed with light rail?

MR CORBELL: Significant regard, and significant regard, too, to the significant benefit that light rail will bring to our city's economy, economic opportunity and jobs for Canberrans. The Liberal Party is opposing a project that is going to deliver over 3½ thousand jobs to the ACT economy at a time when we know there is going to be a significant downturn in the civil construction sector here in the ACT. This project will support and put dollars in the pockets of form workers and concreters, builders and

labourers, landscapers, suppliers. All of those people will be benefiting directly from this project, and it is only the Liberal Party that is opposed to creating jobs for Canberrans.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, does the ACT government have a deficit figure in mind which, when reached, would mean you would consider abandoning light rail?

MR CORBELL: That is not a question for me. That is a question for the Treasurer, ultimately. But I simply make the point that this government is committed to the delivery of this project. It is a key election commitment. It is a commitment we spelt out clearly to the people of Canberra before the last election. It is a commitment we are now implementing. And it is a commitment that will deliver jobs and economic opportunity for our city and for our community.

Let us be very clear: the project delivers over a billion dollars worth of economic benefits across the ACT economy. It will employ over 3½ thousand Canberrans during the construction phase, and it will deliver significant economic opportunity in the long term as we transform the pattern of development along the corridor, increase land values, increase investment in our city—all things that the counterparts of those opposite in the federal parliament are doing in a completely contrary way when they continue to cut jobs and undermine economic confidence in our city.

Economy—policy

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Economic Development. Minister, what actions has the ACT government taken to diversify the ACT economy since September 2013?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the question, and indeed for the opportunity to again advise the Assembly of the significant range of actions that the ACT Labor government has taken to support our economy in recent years.

This morning I provided an update on the growth, diversification and jobs business development strategy for the territory, a strategy that is focused on diversifying our private sector base to create new jobs in our city. Our city's creativity and connectedness provide a very strong foundation on which to build a dynamic private sector economy. Guided by the business development strategy, we are harnessing knowledge to drive innovation and business growth.

The government has always been alert to the key risks posed by the commonwealth's contraction and has been implementing a range of measures to support our economy in the short term, in addition to our longer term strategic plans for growth and diversification. In this context it might be worth noting that we are indeed using the fiscal policy as a way of stimulating our economy through this difficult period. This is a deliberate policy choice of the government, and it is a policy choice that is supporting jobs in our economy and continued economic growth.

The alternative position that has been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow treasurer in their interjections and debate contributions today indicates that, had they been in government during this period, they would have been joining the contraction game. They would have been joining the cutting and they would have been party to sending this economy into recession. The fact that we have not gone into a recession and we have continued to grow is testimony to the success of this government's economic policies during this period.

In March last year we announced a stimulus package designed to support activity in the construction sector. The government has also implemented a number of initiatives to provide short-term support for a number of sectors of the territory economy to assist them in responding to the challenges that they have faced as a result of Tony Abbott's cuts. This has included funding to assist former public servants to make the transition into the private sector.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: They are very sensitive about these issues. Like every other state Liberal Party in the country, they are desperate to see a leadership change at the federal level to bring old cuddly “Uncle Malcolm” into the leadership role, because “toxic Tony” is driving state Liberal parties into extinction around the country. And I can understand why. It is why I am the number one supporter of the Prime Minister in this place. I hope that Tony Abbott stays in that job for a very long time—certainly through until October 2016.

Mr Hanson: A long, long time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: Measured in terms of the Liberal Party's approach to leaders, that is a matter of months. Nonetheless, I support him through to October 2016, when he can face the electorate. And we certainly look forward to that.

As I was saying, we continue our focus on investment in the territory economy, supporting the productive capacity of our economy and highlighting our efforts to support key industries, particularly higher education. We will have the opportunity in this place to debate a significant reform bill for the University of Canberra that will encourage further growth of the university sector. *(Time expired.)*

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, I ask you to make a ruling as to whether the Chief Minister's language was appropriate and whether it was indeed befitting of a member, let alone the Chief Minister, in describing the Prime Minister of Australia.

MADAM SPEAKER: I was contemplating that, perhaps in anticipation that someone might take a point of order. Although the form and practice of this place is that we refer to people by their titles, and I think the general form and practice should be that we refer to members of other parliaments by their title, there is no hard and fast rule. But I think it would be befitting if we were respectful. I cannot say that Mr Barr's language was unparliamentary, but it is not the sort of form and practice that we follow in this place, and I would like members to keep that in mind when they are referring to members of other parliaments. A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how has diversifying the ACT economy helped Canberra through this period of savage commonwealth job cuts?

MR BARR: A comparison of the territory's economic performance during two distinct periods of Liberal federal government cuts to Canberra certainly illustrates the benefits of diversifying our economy. In the mid 1990s, when the Howard Liberal government started slashing jobs here in Canberra, in the first year the number of unemployed people jumped by 3,000, the unemployment rate rose by 1.7 percentage points and within a 12-month period total employment had dropped by 5½ thousand. This time around, our economy has continued to perform well, given the federal Liberal job cuts. A clear indication is that our economic development approach is indeed paying dividends. So we are unequivocally a much more diverse and resilient economy in 2015 than we were in 1996.

We are working with the private sector in Canberra to shore up our economy to weather the Abbott Liberal government's cuts. Without diversification of our economy, without a stronger and more vibrant private sector, the thousands of jobs cut by Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister, would have a far greater impact on our economy and our community. Our city would be a very different place right now if it were not for the increased economic diversification that this government has been driving.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, can you tell us more about why economic diversification is so important for our community?

MR BARR: Certainly it is supporting jobs and continued economic growth in our economy. It is supporting the range of goals that this government has for a more inclusive society, one in which people who want to work have the opportunity to work and one where people's aspirations around education outcomes, around their own ability to contribute to our community are supported. A more diverse economy assists us to respond to external shocks, whether they are the all too frequent external shocks of Liberal governments at the national level or, indeed, external shocks that the global economy experiences from time to time.

The territory government will continue our focus on the range of economic development programs that we have outlined today and the range of legislative reforms that will encourage more growth in key sectors of the territory economy.

We will have to be bold. We will have to make a range of decisions in order to continue economic growth and jobs growth in our community, and we are prepared to make those decisions. I will continue to bring legislation to this Assembly in order to achieve those ends because it is important. It is important for continued job opportunities and continued economic growth for Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, what responsibility does your government take for the 14,500 jobs cut by the federal Labor government when Kevin Rudd took, as he said, “a meat axe” to the federal public service?

MR BARR: I did not sit in that cabinet room.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! I think Mr Barr did not get two or three seconds into his answer. I think he should be heard in relative silence.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It might have escaped the Leader of the Opposition, but I did not sit in those cabinets and was not responsible for those decisions. I cannot take responsibility for decisions of other governments. What I can do is take responsibility for what we do in response. What I can do is be very clear about what responsibilities and what actions we will take and compare and contrast those with the alternative in this place, which is where we have responsibility. That comparison is important for the community to understand.

This morning we heard Mr Smyth say we spend too much. Therefore, the shadow Treasurer has highlighted that a Liberal government would be in the business of cutting.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker—

MR BARR: That is what those opposite are wanting to run away from.

MADAM SPEAKER: Have you got a point of order, Mr Hanson?

Mr Hanson: On a point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Mr Hanson: My question was directly related to the 14,500 jobs cut by the Labor Party, not to some fanciful jobs that he thinks are going to be cut by a Liberal Party sometime in the future. I would ask him to address the 14,500 jobs cut by the federal Labor Party and not try and distract from those 14,500 jobs that were cut by Labor.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: Madam Speaker, if that is going to be Mr Hanson's point, I would ask you to rule as to whether or not he can ask the Chief Minister a question about decisions taken by the federal Labor government for which he has no ministerial responsibility. I think the Chief Minister is answering the question in the spirit that it was asked, but if we are going to get technical I would ask you to consider whether or not the question is in order.

Mr Hanson: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, Mr Barr has been talking about decisions made by the federal Liberal government, even going as far as describing the Prime Minister as "toxic Tony". I think that in that context it is perfectly reasonable to ask about the 14,500 jobs that were cut by the Labor Party and what his response is to that.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, I think that the question is clear in that it relates to a certain set of job cuts; we have been talking about job cuts by the commonwealth. I think that Mr Barr has been answering the question in the spirit in which it was asked, and he has 42 seconds to continue to do so.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, the point I make is that what we have responsibility for is our response to the circumstances that we face. Our response is clear; it is demonstrated in our budget and in our policy commitments. What we hear from those opposite—and it is fair enough; they can argue this—is their view of less ACT government spending. They want to join the cuts. That is what they want to do.

Mr Hanson: That is not true. That's a lie!

MADAM SPEAKER: Withdraw, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw.

MR BARR: That is what they want to do. If they do not, maybe they can put an alternative position on the table.

Schools—Telopea Park

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, it has been recently reported that Telopea Park School is to lose tennis courts located on Montgomery Oval, land which has been part of the school since 1927. The area in question is being given to provide a new home for the Manuka occasional care centre. Minister, what consultations were had with the school, when did those consultations take place, who from the school attended those discussions and who conducted the consultations?

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister for education—

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, this in fact relates to a matter in my portfolio, as it is the Land Development Agency—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, the Chief Minister.

MR BARR: The Minister for Economic Development in this instance. For the benefit of Mr Doszpot, these matters in relation to land and the various decisions that have flowed in relation to the loss of the Services Club site from that fire a few years ago are the responsibility of—

Mr Smyth: You have not lost the site; you have lost the club.

MR BARR: Indeed, sorry, the club. They are my responsibility in the Land Development Agency portfolio. We have been working with a range of stakeholders in order to provide a new location and a new facility for the Services Club, increased childcare provision within the inner south and enhanced sporting facilities for the Telopea Park School. And that has involved, in order to make all of this work, a series of land swaps. Consultation involved the LDA meeting with a range of stakeholders—the Services Club, Manuka occasional care and the education department, who also then held consultations with affected stakeholders, including the Telopea Park School—in relation to the entirety of that package of change that would facilitate a new site and construction, in partnership with Defence Housing Australia, for the Services Club, a new location and expanded childcare facilities, with Manuka occasional care being given the first right to take up that opportunity, and an \$800,000 boost in terms of new sporting facilities for the Telopea school.

As members would be aware, land in this area is scarce. So a decision was taken by the government, following a round of consultation, to adopt the position that we have. That is that the Manuka occasional care site would become available for the Services Club, in partnership with Defence Housing Australia, to build a new facility; Manuka occasional care would be supported into a new, expanded childcare facility on the site of those tennis courts adjacent to Montgomery Oval, between Manuka Oval and the Telopea Park School; and new sporting facilities would be built for the Telopea school.

I recognise not everyone is in favour of this outcome. Nonetheless, it is a way forward for each of the organisations. The government are committed to ensuring there is a new site for the Services Club and that, after that tragedy where that facility was burned down, there is a way forward for that group—and we believe there is now. We will work closely with Manuka occasional care and, indeed, with the Telopea Park School to see new facilities built for both of those stakeholders to ensure that we get better childcare facilities and increased childcare facilities, that we get better sporting facilities for the Telopea school and that we get a home for the Services Club.

I think that is a good outcome. It is not to everyone's satisfaction 100 per cent, but rarely do you get an outcome where everyone is 100 per cent satisfied. In my view, after nearly four years of work to line all of this up, it is a positive net outcome for the community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what was the school's response to the proposal?

MR BARR: The school have welcomed an \$800,000 boost to their sporting facilities, but, as I acknowledged in my previous answer, not everyone is as happy with the fact that those facilities will be built within the existing school footprint and that this outcome does require a childcare-sized parcel of land being made available for child care.

But what it will also allow is a range of improvements in that precinct, particularly to traffic flows, to assist with both pick-up and drop-off times associated with the school and the childcare centre, recognising that those are busy times and that Telopea does attract students from around the territory. So there is a need to work on that particular issue. A part of this package, I guess, is to be able to improve access to and egress from the various sites.

But let us be clear: the tennis courts are to become a childcare centre and new courts will be built. So whilst I acknowledge the loss of a parcel of land the size of a childcare centre and surrounds, I think there is a valid reason for this and there is a net community benefit in that there will be more childcare places in a purpose-built facility in the inner south. Telopea school will get new tennis courts and other sporting facilities and the Services Club has a new home. So I think that overall, on balance, acknowledging that everyone is not 100 per cent happy, it is a good outcome for the community overall.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, is this the final arrangement or will there be further discussions with regard to the compensation package for the loss of land?

MR BARR: The government will of course continue to work closely with all of the affected parties in order to achieve the outcome that we are desiring; that is, of course—and I repeat—a new home for the Services Club, enhanced high quality childcare facilities and enhanced and high quality sporting facilities. We will see, as we move into the detail phase of construction, whether the allocations that have been made at this point are sufficient. So I am not ruling out there being some minor change, but equally I do not want to send a signal that there will be radical change, because there will not be. We need to resolve this. The Services Club have been waiting for a long time. In this year, the centenary of Anzac, I think it is appropriate that we find a new home for the Services Club.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, were there any other options presented or was there just a single option presented with regard to the relocation of the tennis courts?

MR BARR: Presented to the education department? My understanding is that, certainly after three years of looking at a range of other sites, that was the only viable option. But let us be clear that there is a large land endowment for the Telopea school. Anyone who is familiar with the campus will recognise there are some parts of that land endowment where new sports facilities can be located and higher quality facilities would in fact be a better outcome.

I repeat: the tennis court facilities, the land equivalent to the size of a childcare centre, will be for a new and expanded childcare centre, where we know there is increased demand. This will allow, I understand, about another 23 childcare places to be created. So it is a positive for early childhood development in that we get a new, purpose-built building. But, yes, some sacrifices are being made here in order to get an outcome for everyone, and I acknowledge that. And not everyone is 100 per cent happy; I acknowledge that as well. But I make the point that, in circumstances like this, in responding to the tragedy of a fire burning down the Services Club and their not having the capacity to rebuild on that site, what we need is a solution that supports the Services Club, supports more childcare provision and supports better sports facilities for Telopea school, and we have achieved that.

Childcare—centres

MS LAWDER: My question, apparently, is also to the Chief Minister, based on the last question. Chief Minister, it was announced in the media recently that the Manuka Occasional Child Care Centre, run by a not-for-profit community association known as Mocca, was to have a new home on land that is currently part of Telopea Park School. Last week Mocca announced that it had no money to build a new centre. Chief Minister, what discussions were conducted with Mocca before this announcement was made? What was the basis of these discussions? Who conducted them?

MADAM SPEAKER: I call Mr Barr, the Chief Minister. Is this for you as well?

MR BARR: It is, yes. As I said in my previous answer, the Land Development Agency and Economic Development undertook these consultations as it involved multiple stakeholders, multiple pieces of land and a coordination effort. So, yes, the representatives from Economic Development met with Manuka occasional care on a number of occasions over the course of this piece of work, which, as I indicated, has stretched over a number of years. Those consultations involved discussions around a new purpose-built facility for Manuka occasional care that would allow for an increased number of childcare enrolments and would also enhance the revenue streams for Manuka occasional care.

As has been discussed, Manuka occasional care were given the opportunity to purchase the land at a concessional rate and to build a facility or the land would be sold with a childcare centre in the lease, with them as the tenant. In this instance, Manuka occasional care have indicated to the government that it is unlikely—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear the answer. I think members would like to hear the answer, Mr Hanson.

MR BARR: Manuka occasional care have indicated that it is unlikely that they will take out a loan in order to acquire the site themselves. They would prefer not to have a more commercial childcare operation. I think it is worth noting that there are a number of commercial childcare operators in this city, and that is not unusual, either. As a result of that consultation, the government has indicated that it can support Manuka occasional care through this process and ensure that they are the tenant in a new building that is on land that has been identified and has been built for that purpose.

I would hope that that opportunity, together with the increased revenue streams that will come from the additional places, will in fact ensure that this not-for-profit organisation is able to flourish in the future. But it does mean change, because it will be a new and bigger site. It will be purpose built and it will meet the national standards for child care. That is an important outcome overall. The government will assist Manuka occasional care through this process.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, does that mean the ACT government will be funding a new building on the Telopea Park School site for Mocca?

MR BARR: No, the government will not be funding a new building. The government will release land to the private sector for the sole purpose of a childcare centre and will facilitate Manuka occasional care to have the first right of refusal to be the tenant in that new facility.

At the moment, Manuka occasional care lease an ageing facility from the ACT government. They do not currently own their building. We are not proposing to be the landlord for this new building, because the private sector can, and will, be interested in purchasing the land and building a new centre. But they will, of course, want an operator, and it is my view that Manuka occasional care can be that operator and should be that operator and have the first right to be that operator.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, in the event that there are no funds or Mocca is unable to take up your offer, will Mocca be evicted from its current site?

MR BARR: The current site is the new site for the Services Club, so there cannot be a new Services Club unless Manuka occasional care moves. So, yes, Manuka occasional care has to move from its existing site in order for a new Services Club to be built.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, if the arrangements as outlined for Mocca prove to be unsuitable or unaffordable to Mocca, will there be any other alternatives provided to them?

MR BARR: Certainly it is the government's preference that child care in the inner south be expanded and Manuka occasional care have the first call on that new facility. Because, as I understand it, they will go from 77 to 100 places. That will mean increased revenue for Manuka occasional care, which should allow them to meet the increased costs associated with a larger and expanded centre—noting, of course, that there are a range of fixed costs associated with childcare provision that would then be spread across a greater number of children. So we will work closely with Manuka occasional care in relation to that business model.

The important point to stress here is that childcare provision operates commercially in this city and that all childcare providers, over time, would be expected to make contributions by way of rent to ensure a level playing field amongst all childcare providers. It is simply unfair for a childcare provider 100 metres down the road to be paying rent and one just 100 metres up the road to not be. There has to be a level playing field. If you are going to get a brand-new building that is expanded and provides increased revenues, it would be reasonable to expect that a level of rent would be paid.

Hospitals—University of Canberra

MS PORTER: Madam Speaker, my question is to the health minister. Minister, you announced this week the reference design for public consultation on an important new piece of health infrastructure, the University of Canberra public hospital. Can you tell us more about this new health facility?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her question. I was very pleased to be joined by Ms Porter and Dr Bourke for the launch of the designs for the new University of Canberra public hospital. This is one of the most significant investments in this Labor government's \$880 million health infrastructure program, the largest rebuild of health infrastructure facilities across the ACT health system in the history of self-government. Already the University of Canberra public hospital project sits alongside other projects also being delivered in the health infrastructure program, including the very popular and effective Canberra Region Cancer Centre, the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, the new adult mental health facilities at the Canberra Hospital, as well as the rebuild of the community health centres at Gungahlin, Belconnen and Tuggeranong. This Labor government is getting on with the job of investing in health facilities for our city and for our community.

The UCPH project will be a health infrastructure project unlike any we have seen in the territory before. It will be designed to focus entirely on subacute care. This is designed to improve services delivered to patients to assist them with their mobility and functioning, often after surgery or acute illness, and it is designed to improve people's quality of life. And that is what is really important about this project. It will have 140 in-patient beds and another 75 day patient places. It will provide a range of

rehabilitation services. I know, for example, there is a lot of interest in new hydrotherapy facilities in Canberra and a new hydrotherapy pool, which is so important for people with mobility problems to get that form of rehabilitation exercise. New hydrotherapy facilities will be provided at the University of Canberra public hospital.

The focus is very much on creating a more home-like environment. Obviously, this facility will be delivering a range of clinical services, but if it can be done in a much more friendly and less clinical environment then that is also conducive to people's rehabilitation. In addition to the hydrotherapy services that I mentioned, there will be physiotherapy services, psychiatric rehabilitation services, speech pathology and exercise physiology, among many other services.

There is also a strong focus on integration with the University of Canberra itself. The Chief Minister has made clear the importance of strengthening our engagement as a government and a community with our tertiary education sector, the opportunities for economic growth and development, jobs and innovation as a result of partnering with our tertiary research and education institutions. At the University of Canberra we have a great example of this policy being put into action. This is providing confidence at a time when the Abbott government is slashing and undermining certainty in the funding environment for research, for our tertiary education institutions. We are providing confidence for the University of Canberra to invest, grow and develop its campus.

I was very pleased to be with the vice-chancellor at the launch on Monday. The vice-chancellor spoke very strongly of the importance of this project for the university and for its future growth and integration with its education and research activities. It is a very, very important project for Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how does the University of Canberra public hospital fit into the ACT's wider health system?

MR CORBELL: Thank you to Ms Porter for the supplementary. It fits in in the context of a growing and ageing population. The number of people over the age of 65 is set to double between now and 2062, so we need to plan for that change. This is designed to shift the emphasis of subacute care away from the Canberra Hospital, and away from Calvary public, to a lesser degree, and to provide it in a dedicated environment, in a dedicated purpose-built building that can deliver those subacute services that people need. This, of course, allows our acute service delivery centres—the Canberra Hospital, with tertiary, trauma and emergency care, and Calvary hospital, with complementary services, where appropriate, with TCH—to focus on those areas of service delivery as we continue to see significant demand in those areas and we create a purpose-built capability for subacute care.

I have talked about the more domestic-like environment we want to try and achieve at UCPH. I have talked about the research centre and opportunities for academics and students in allied health professions and in the nursing profession—being able to

undertake training and have practical experience in UCPH. But of course we will also see very effective support for that ageing population. For example, we will see a dedicated aged-care assessment team in place at UCPH; we will see a residential aged-care specialist to help those older Canberrans needing to navigate their way into the residential aged-care sector; and we will see new sensory areas for dementia care patients. These are all very important responses to a growing and ageing population, at the same time freeing up capacity at our tertiary treatment centre sites. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, what other important health projects are being delivered through the health infrastructure program?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the supplementary. This is, as I mentioned earlier, just one part of the broader health infrastructure program being delivered by this Labor government—a program that is delivering jobs in terms of additional nursing, medical and other health staff capability, delivering better health services for our community in terms of better, more modern infrastructure, and of course driving jobs in the construction and development sector during the development phase.

We have seen, as Ms Fitzharris would know very well, the very well received Gungahlin Community Health Centre, a great new facility for the Gungahlin district. With respect to similar upgrades, there is the \$19 million upgrade at Tuggeranong for the Tuggeranong Community Health Centre and the \$51 million new build of the Belconnen Community Health Centre. This Labor government is reaching out to all districts across the ACT and investing in better health facilities for our community.

Of course, we have the new intensive care, coronary care, high dependency unit at the Canberra Hospital. We have the new \$111 million Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. We are investing in the new adult mental health unit. We are investing in new cancer treatment at the Canberra Region Cancer Centre. One of the first places I went to as the new health minister was to meet the staff and patients at the Canberra Region Cancer Centre. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from the staff and from the people using that facility. They welcomed this major investment.

Equally, the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is a fantastic new facility. It was great to talk to the staff there and to meet the mums, dads and kids there in that facility. They welcomed this government's investment in this infrastructure. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what positive impacts will the completed University of Canberra public hospital have on the ACT government's broader mental health strategy?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary. UCPH will deliver some specific mental health care settings as part of its overall role. Obviously, we have invested in the new secure mental health unit. That project is now underway—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MR CORBELL: But we are also focused on those subacute care settings for mental health services. The UCPH will deliver a range of subacute mental health care settings and supported accommodation options—important infrastructure to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable in our community, those who are suffering from and dealing with the circumstances of severe mental illness.

Some of our facilities need to be upgraded. Places like Brian Hennessy House need to be upgraded. We need to provide good alternatives to those into the future. That is what this new facility is going to do. This Labor government has had the commitment and the foresight to drive a significant investment program to improve health infrastructure, to improve models of care, to provide new care settings to meet the needs of an ageing population and a growing population.

Only this Labor government is taking that long-term view when it comes to infrastructure investment. We are doing the same things in transport. We are doing the same things in urban development. And here in health we are focused on where we can make the investment to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population in a way that sets up our health system to respond for the long term. That is what governments are expected to do.

Disability services—funding

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, a communique written by the Executive Director of Disability ACT on 25 November 2014 stated:

The performance of the NDIS transition will be monitored for the first six months. It is not anticipated that many providers in receipt of ACT Government funding will have any significant cash flow risks arising from the speed of the transition in this period. Providers that are found to be adversely affected will be reimbursed in the third quarter of the 2014/15 financial year.

Minister, is this commitment being honoured?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Wall for his question. As we move to the NDIS, certainly the directorate maintains its commitment to work with service providers in the transition, which includes cash flow, as their clients move into the NDIS. I have spoken to a number of providers. The system works. There could always be improvements but the commitment remains. The other partner in this is the NDIA, to make sure that the transition plans and the forecast of the number of clients going through are matched. If there is a mismatch, we have to come back and almost recalibrate that cash transaction to the non-government organisations. But it is a commitment that we will honour and maintain.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, how many service providers have indicated to you that a reimbursement will be required so far?

MS BURCH: I do not have that information available. I could say that it was very fluid in response. It is the number of clients, it is the service providers and, indeed, their own capacity to manage their cash flow until the plans go through. There is the matter of the client going into the NDIA, the plan being approved, the plan being activated and then the receipt being issued—the invoice being issued and paid.

So it is a complicated process. I am happy to come back with some advice, but I do not know if we can determine the number of clients, the number of services. But I am happy to come back with the information that I can provide.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how many service providers did you budget for as requiring a reimbursement?

MS BURCH: All the service providers that had clients that were going to transition into the NDIS. We knew that this would be a result—that, with the bulk of the funding agreement currently in place with these service providers, as the clients moved to the NDIS the cash flow would change and the money would come from the NDIS.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what is the anticipated value of the total reimbursement?

MS BURCH: I do not have that information available. If it can be tied in to the other information, I will bring back what I can.

ACT Ambulance Service—alleged bullying

MR SMYTH: My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, the former emergency services minister announced a review of the ACT Ambulance Service culture in October 2013, following allegations of bullying and a toxic management culture. When will you be releasing the report of this review?

MS BURCH: Shortly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will this report be released in its entirety?

MS BURCH: The report that I am planning to put out will be released in its entirety.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when was this review completed?

MS BURCH: I think you are referring to a report. There was a final draft of a consultancy report provided to me. That is a work in progress. The government's response to that is a work in progress and, as I have said, that will be released shortly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what version of the report will you be releasing and what are the key findings and recommendations of that version?

MS BURCH: The key findings and recommendations of the report that I will be releasing will be evident when I release the report.

Mr Doszpot: A point of order. I asked what version. The minister made no reference to that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Have you got a version answer?

MS BURCH: I have answered the question.

Women—domestic violence

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, there have been stories in the *Canberra Times* about the pressure domestic violence services are facing. What is causing this pressure?

MS BERRY: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Like many Canberrans, I was deeply distressed to hear of the death of a mother of three as a result of domestic violence. When tragedies like this occur it reminds us of the vulnerability of women in these circumstances and highlights the pressures on domestic violence services in the ACT.

Since the death of this woman a couple of weeks ago, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service has recorded a spike in the number of women seeking assistance and support, with some disclosing their experience of family violence to the Domestic Violence Crisis Service for the first time. This has had an impact at a local and national level, with increased awareness as media articles and public discussion about violence against women increase, prompting other victims to come forward and more women to seek domestic violence support services.

As media and community awareness of domestic violence increases in the ACT, so does the number of women who are seeking assistance and support from our services. From a national perspective, I believe that the Prime Minister's recent announcement of Rosie Batty as the 2015 Australian of the Year raised the profile of domestic violence and sexual assaults and prompted an increased ongoing dialogue and public discussions.

As Minister for Women in the ACT, I am committed to raising awareness about violence against women and to alleviating the pressures on domestic violence services available to those affected in our community. The ACT government strongly believes in the rights of everyone in our community to be free from violence in all its forms.

So how do we as a government move forward to address the pressures on domestic violence services? We do need to continue to work collaboratively to address the causes of violence and abuse against women, because the consequences are far-reaching and it is an issue that affects our entire community. Supporting domestic violence services is a priority for the government. We continue to move forward to support new initiatives that address community attitudes and support women and children dealing with domestic violence.

This includes \$150,000 in funding for the ACT women's grants program, including funding for the Audrey Fagan violence prevention grant. We acknowledge that the women's information offices at the child and family centres are now better equipped to provide information and refer women to support services in our community. This has occurred through the re-engineering of the services to be more accessible and more responsive than previously centrally located shopfronts.

We continue to provide the ACT women's return-to-work grant funding to support women, including those experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault, to return to the workforce. Empowering women to gain confidence and financial independence is the main part of this program. We move forward by not hiding the horrors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Rather, we stand united in supporting our domestic violence prevention services and applaud the workers for their tireless efforts and recognise their significant expertise.

The ACT government's work to address domestic violence consists of several complementing strategies and initiatives to alleviate the pressures on domestic violence prevention services, some of which have been mentioned here today. We are united in the prevention of domestic violence and providing appropriate services so that no door is unopened, no telephone is unanswered, nor any individual unavailable. The ACT government continues its efforts in the prevention of domestic violence in our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us more about what the ACT government is doing to support women experiencing domestic violence?

MS BERRY: The ACT government provided over \$5.5 million in 2014-15 towards crisis responses for those experiencing domestic and family and sexual violence, and for specialised accommodation and outreach services for women who are escaping domestic or family violence. The ACT government is united to continue to work towards the prevention of violence against women and children in our community.

Our commitment is demonstrated in the ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy 2011-17—“Our responsibility: ending violence against women and children”. The strategy provides overarching principles to guide violence prevention activities across government and non-government agencies and provides flexible and targeted responses to women and children experiencing violence.

I am pleased to update members that we are continuing to address perpetrators’ behaviour by supporting men to change their behaviour. There are a number of initiatives, including the Canberra Men’s Centre working with the man program, to address issues including violence against women and offensive behaviour.

The ACT government understands that women and children leaving domestic violence are further at risk. We provide a range of specialised accommodation, outreach and specialist domestic violence services for women in Canberra who are escaping domestic or family violence and sexual assault and who may be experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. This is administered by Housing ACT.

Funding for services is primarily provided by the commonwealth to the ACT government via the national affordable housing agreement. However, the ACT government provides additional funds to the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

Our ongoing commitment to engage with key stakeholders in the Canberra business sector and promote awareness of the issue of domestic violence includes the partners in prevention function. This program encourages a commitment from the business sector to be proactive in addressing negative— *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to better understand and improve responses to domestic violence?

MS BERRY: I am pleased today to provide members with an update on the important collaborative government work to address the national approach against domestic violence, including the ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy 2011-17.

Members will also be aware of the ACT women’s plan 2010-15, which is our strategic framework to improve the status and lives of women and girls in Canberra. It identifies the need to improve the safety and security of women as one of three outcome areas. This year, we will be undertaking extensive consultation with the community to ensure we better understand and improve responses to domestic violence in the ACT. The women’s plan provides the strategic underpinning for the ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy. It is deliberately called “our responsibility” in an effort to emphasise the joined-up nature of the responses that are required.

I would also like to update members on the second implementation plan which is currently being developed. In order to maximise the quality of the second implementation plan, the ACT government has participated in extensive consultation with a wide range of community stakeholders, including the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian Coordination Committee; the Children and Youth Services Council; the Joint Community Government Reference Group; and the Law Reform Advisory Council.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how is the government working with other states and territories and the federal government in developing a national approach?

MS BERRY: I am pleased to be able to talk about the approach that the national government is taking in addressing this issue. The ACT government will be continuing to work with the federal government and territory and state governments on bringing attention to this as a national issue and also as a state and territory issue. The Attorney-General has already written, along with other state and territory ministers, to the federal government, calling on the government to continue to fund community legal centres in the ACT and across the country. I, as the Minister for Women, have also written to the Minister for Social Services, asking him to continue funding community services in the ACT so that we can continue to address this very important issue in the ACT.

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

Questions without notice

Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: I would like to reflect more on the point of order raised by Mr Coe, referring to members of other parliaments. As I said when Mr Coe raised the point, I was contemplating this issue, but my recollection of proceedings in this place was not as clear as I would have hoped. The Clerk has referred me to a ruling that I made on 14 May 2014 on this matter. At that stage I quoted from *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice* and also referred to continuing resolution No 7 in the standing orders, in relation to free speech.

I would remind members of what is said in *Odgers*, starting on page 258, in relation to the rules of debate. The second paragraph starts by saying:

Certain institutions and categories of office-holders are specifically protected by the standing orders against offensive words and personal reflections ... This protection is extended to:

a vote of the Senate ...

the monarch, the Governor-General and governors of states

both Houses of the Parliament and the houses of the state and territory parliaments

senators, members of the House of Representatives and members of state and territory parliaments

judicial officers.

Further, on page 259 *Odgers* goes on to say:

The rule against offensive words, imputations of improper motives and personal reflections directed to members of either House of the Commonwealth Parliament or to members of state and territory parliaments ... is designed to ensure comity and mutual respect between houses of parliaments and between the Commonwealth and state and territory parliaments, and to ensure that debate between those who are by virtue of their offices the principal participants in political debate is conducted in the privileged forum of Parliament without personally offensive language.

Could I remind members in this place that this is the form and practice of parliaments. I do not think I could go so far as to rule Mr Barr's language as unparliamentary and cause him to withdraw it, but could I remind members that in accordance with the statement that I made in May 2014 I will uphold the practice in this place that we refer to members of other parliaments by their title or their surnames—for example, the Prime Minister, the member for Warringah or Mr Abbott, and not “toxic Tony”.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Report No 1/2015—Debt Management, dated 25 February 2015.

Standing order 191—Amendments to:

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, dated 24 and 25 February 2015.

Electoral Amendment Bill 2014 (No 2), dated 24 and 25 February 2015.

Judicial Commissions Amendment Bill 2014, dated 24 and 25 February 2015.

Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, dated 24 and 25 February 2015.

Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (ACT) Bill 2014, dated 24 and 25 February 2015.

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

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

Long-term contracts:

Anthony Graham, dated 25 February 2015.

Melanie Taylor, dated 10 and 11 February 2015.

Stephen Anderson, dated 17 February 2015.

Short-term contracts:

Andrew Parkinson, dated 8 and 11 February 2015.

Anita Hargreaves, dated 13 and 17 February 2015.

Benjamin McHugh, dated 10 and 11 February 2015.

Brett Phillips, dated 16 and 17 February 2015.

David Snowden, dated 23 February 2015.

Grant Kennealy, dated 27 February and 3 March 2015.

Joanne Garrisson, dated 24 and 25 February 2015.

Karen Greenland, dated 22 and 23 February 2015.

Lyndall Kennedy, dated 2 and 3 March 2015.

Martin Hine, dated 22 and 23 February 2015.

Mary Toohey, dated 27 February and 3 March 2015.

Melanie Saballa, dated 6 and 11 February 2015.

Sandra Georges, dated 25 February 2015.

Stephen Gniel, dated 25 February 2015.

Victor Martin, dated 3 March 2015.

Wendy Cuzner, dated 26 February and 3 March 2015.

Contract variations:

Leanne Power, dated 4 and 23 February 2015.

Peter Le Lievre, dated 5 and 11 February 2015.

Richard Baumgart, dated 27 February and 4 March 2015.

Therese Gehrig, dated 27 February and 3 March 2015.

Industry panel declaration and report Paper and statement by minister

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Act, pursuant to section 24—Industry Panel—*Application made by Icon Water Limited under section 24S of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Act 1997 in relation to the first biennial recalibration*—Declaration and Report, dated 18 February 2015.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: As the referring authority, I have presented to the Assembly the industry panel declaration and report—application made by Icon Water Ltd under section 24S of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Act 1997 in relation to the first biennial recalibration—dated 18 February 2015.

This report has been undertaken by the industry panel who are reviewing the current water and sewerage price direction. As a result of this work Icon Water Ltd made an application to alter the current price direction to stop the first biennial recalibration. This application was made under section 24S of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Act 1997—the ICRC Act.

The industry panel report incorporates two declarations. The first is to cease the first biennial recalibration process under the current price direction. The second is that if the industry panel does not release its final decision on water and sewerage prices by Friday, 5 June 2015, the current 2014-15 prices for water and sewerage will continue to apply in 2015-16.

The ICRC Act requires the referring authority to present the Assembly with the report of investigations undertaken by an industry panel. I commend this report to the Assembly.

Papers

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 47—Instrument of approval of guarantee—

Ararat Wind Farm Pty Ltd, dated 13 March 2015.

Coonooer Bridge Wind Farm Pty Ltd, dated 13 March 2015.

HWF1 Pty Ltd, dated 13 March 2015.

Co-location feasibility study—racing codes and exhibition facilities

Paper and statement by minister

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Racing codes and exhibition facilities—Stage 1: Colocation feasibility study—Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, dated 16 September 2014, prepared by Deloitte Access Economics.

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

Leave granted.

MS BURCH: Today I have tabled the stage 1 co-location feasibility study—racing codes and exhibition facilities. This study was a commitment made by the ACT

government to investigate the co-location of the three racing codes following a report by the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission into the ACT racing industry.

Deloitte Access Economics was engaged to conduct the co-location study, in consultation with the three racing codes—the Canberra Racing Club, the Canberra Harness Racing Club and the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club. Exhibition Park in Canberra—EPIC—was also included in this study, given its close proximity to Thoroughbred Park, its current status as landlord for the harness club and the likely efficiencies that could be realised by co-locating these facilities more broadly.

Consultation with stakeholders was a very important part of the project. All three racing codes, as well as EPIC management, were consulted and provided the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

The study assessed 10 options for how co-location of the territory’s racing clubs could be achieved. The options were grouped around three venues—at Thoroughbred Park, at a greenfield site or at the current greyhound club site in Symonston.

For the ACT racing industry and EPIC, co-location may offer a number of benefits, including increased scale of operations, shared facilities and reduced administration and maintenance costs. Co-location also provides the opportunity for the racing industry to develop a racing entertainment precinct, beyond what each code can achieve independently.

The study found that without the proceeds from redevelopment as part of urban renewal, the government would be unable to finance the co-location options, noting that the cost of options varies between \$20 million and \$220 million.

In conclusion, the analysis suggests a number of options worthy of further consideration, which entails either all clubs and EPIC co-locating to a greenfield site or a permutation of these entities moving to a greenfield site—and freeing up land for urban development.

In view of the findings and the comments provided by the racing clubs and EPIC, the government has decided to undertake further work examining the functions and land use at EPIC and the co-location of the Canberra Harness Racing Club.

The government has also provided a commitment to the Canberra Racing Club and the Greyhound Racing Club that no further work will be undertaken in the meantime regarding the relocation of these clubs from their current sites.

I have tabled the co-location feasibility study for the Assembly’s interest.

**Planning and Development Act 2007—variations Nos 304, 336 and 338 to the territory plan
Papers and statement by minister**

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for

Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (3.50): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approvals of Variations to the Territory Plan, together with background papers, a copy of the summaries and reports and a copy of any direction or report required—

No 304—Commercial Zones Development Code—Introduction of floor area provisions for shops in local centres and mixed use zones—Zone objectives—Revision of CZ4 local centres zone objectives, dated 27 February 2015.

No 336—ACT Government Land Release Program—Symonston Section 1 Block 8 and Section 115 Block 1—Zone changes and changes to the Symonston precinct map and code, dated 2 March 2015.

No 338—ACT Government Land Release Program—Mitchell section 54 block 3—Amendment to the Territory Plan definitions and changes to the Mitchell precinct map and code, dated 2 March 2015.

In accordance with the provisions of the act, these variations are presented with the background papers and copies of the summaries and reports.

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the papers.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: Variation 304 is the culmination of a review into supermarket competition policy in the ACT, which began in 2009. The variation has been informed through consultation with the community and by the recommendations of the Legislative Assembly's former Select Committee on ACT Supermarket Competition Policy. It also reflects this government delivering on a key election commitment from 2012. Variation 304 provides a way forward so that local centres in particular can once again be locations for viable supermarkets and retail shops.

Variation 304 stimulates reinvestment in commercial centres while maintaining the retail hierarchy across the city. It will protect the long-term future of Canberra's local shops by introducing floor area provisions for shops in local centres and in mixed use zones. The variation also revises CZ4 local centre zone objectives. Specifically, variation 304 will revise an objective of the commercial CZ4 local centre zone to provide explicit reference to people with mobility issues; omit the provision in the commercial zones development code that requires development at a local centre to have regard for any significant economic impact on other commercially viable local centres; establish a maximum gross floor area of 1,000 square metres for a shop at local centres while allowing shops with a greater floor area to redevelop to their existing limits; and establish a maximum gross floor limit of 1,500 square metres for shop development in the commercial CZ5 mixed use zone.

Recently Mr Coe asked me during question time if further changes would be made to draft variation 304 before I approved it. For clarity, on 12 November last year I directed the Planning and Land Authority to change the variation to limit the size of shops in local centres to 1,000 square metres unless the lessee already had an existing

shop greater than 1,000 square metres. In these cases, the lessee can build to the existing size. I also directed the Planning and Land Authority to remove from the variation the proposed changes to gross floor area for shops in group and town centres. This means the current floor area limits will continue to apply. Aside from formatting changes to the variation, no other changes were made to the variation before I approved it.

Prior to the early 1990s, almost all local centres had a supermarket. By 2011, despite actions to widen land uses permitted in local centres and higher residential densities being permitted in adjacent areas, some 30 per cent of local centres no longer had a supermarket. This was primarily a result of changes in retail expenditure patterns. Without intervention, it is likely this trend will continue. The policy will assist local centres to continue to operate as supermarket locations and provide convenience retailing to surrounding populations. This is dependent, of course, on other factors influencing these centres, such as catchment size, location and site constraints.

Draft variation 304 was released for public comment between 22 March 2013 and 6 May 2013. It attracted 14 public submissions. The main concerns raised in these submissions related to the proposed floor area limits, the introduction of the term “net selling area”, the potential impacts on retail hierarchy, and the realignment of commercial zone boundaries in the group centres in Holt, Macquarie, Mawson and Wanniasa.

These issues were raised primarily by stakeholders in retail trade in the ACT, and they raised some valid points. I can advise that several of the proposed provisions have been revised accordingly. The concept of the net selling area has been removed. The proposed increases to gross floor area limits for shops in group and town centres have been removed and the commercial zone boundaries in the four group centres will remain as they are.

I can also advise that the proposed limit on gross floor area of shops in local centres has been revised down from 1,500 square metres to 1,000 square metres. By limiting the size of shops and supermarkets at local centres, the potential impacts of local centre expansion on other centres are reduced and the retail hierarchy is maintained. While the 1,000-square-metre limit is slightly larger than the supermarkets operating at most existing centres, the most vibrant and successful local centres have the larger floor spaces. The increased floor area limits offer scope for local centres to provide a wider range of goods to enable them to be more competitive with supermarkets found at town and group centres. It also allows for redevelopment or reinvestment in those shopping centres which already have a GFA higher than the 1,000 square metres to redevelop up to the existing GFA. I believe the concerns raised during community consultation have been adequately considered and that there are no outstanding issues.

Before I move on to discussing the other two variations I am tabling today, I want to make the point that variation 304 and its reduction to GFA in local centres does not in any way preclude any one retailer from developing or redeveloping a local or group centre. It does not intend to favour any one retailer over another. What it does is protect the hierarchy of our supermarkets at local, group and town centres for the benefit of all. We know a viable, thriving and well-patronised supermarket also helps

keep other retailing services at the local shops, like the butcher, the hairdresser and the local takeaway. All these small businesses are worthy of a chance to thrive, and this really is at the heart of this variation.

On the other DVs, an omnibus of seven draft variations to the territory plan was released in 2014 in support of the government's land release and public housing redevelopment programs. I have approved the first two variations from the omnibus. The remaining five draft variations are still under review and will be provided to me in due course.

The omnibus territory plan variation was designed to provide the community with more information about the sites, both in a broad context and on a site-specific basis. I believe the omnibus territory plan variation process has been very successful in this regard. The early consultation has been well received by the community, and the comments that have been made on the various sites have helped inform the planning outcomes the territory is trying to achieve. These outcomes are a revitalised public housing portfolio and land that is released for its highest and best use while delivering the highest return.

The omnibus draft variations were released for public comment between 7 November and 19 December 2014. Variation 336 Symonston proposes to rezone land at block 8 section 1 Symonston and block 1 section 115 Symonston from IZ1 general industry zone to the IZ2 industrial mixed use zone and the PRZ1 urban open space zone. There are also consequential amendments to the Symonston precinct map and code.

Many benefits arise from the rezoning of this land. Firstly, the IZ2 mixed use industrial zoning will make more land available for industrial uses. The site was underutilised in the IZ1 general industry zoning. The much-needed IZ2 zoned land will be released for sale as part of the land release program. Variation 336 Symonston attracted one public submission that supported the rezoning of part of the site to protect the grasslands but indicated a preference for more of the site to be protected. A significant portion of the site has now been included in the PRZ1 urban open space zone. This protects the high value grassland areas of the site from future development. This is a significant win for the environment.

Variation 338 Mitchell proposes to amend the Mitchell precinct map and code to allow civic administration as assessable development on block 3 section 54 Mitchell. It also amends the territory plan definition of "civic administration" to add "archive" as a common term. This site is currently included in the NUZ1 broadacre zone. This zone prohibits civic administration. This prohibition is not entirely consistent with the National Capital Plan, which generally allows a larger range of development in the broadacre areas than the territory plan broadacre zone. The Environment and Planning Directorate has been monitoring this situation and is looking to reconcile the difference between the National Capital Plan and the territory plan broadacre provisions as part of a broader strategic review of the broadacre zone.

In the meantime, the ACT government does not wish to inhibit development in the NUZ1 broadacre zone. When the land release program identified a need for land for larger scale civic administration uses, including archives, this site at Mitchell was

identified. Variation 338 Mitchell also attracted one public submission. Concerns were raised about stormwater quantity and quality, particularly in relation to the community gardens adjoining the site. Stormwater management is a matter well regulated by the territory plan and can and should be dealt with at the detailed stage of design as part of a future development application for the development of the site. EPD has responded to these matters.

Under section 73 of the Planning and Development Act I have exercised my discretion and not referred the draft variations to the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services as I believe there are no outstanding issues with any of these variations. I am pleased to table the approved variations to the territory plan—variation 304 commercial zones; variation 336 Symonston; and variation 338 Mitchell—and I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the papers.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.03): I thank the minister for moving that the papers be noted. I want to put on the record a request on behalf of the opposition—that is, for you, minister, to clarify what this variation means for the Giralang local centre. As you would be aware, the Giralang shops are under construction at present. They are currently up to about ground level, and there is considerable doubt in the community as to what DV304 means for that centre. With that said, we happily welcome the minister's remarks now or very soon as to the impact it will have on the Giralang local centre.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Ms Burch presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Crimes (Sentencing) Act—Crimes (Sentencing) Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-3 (LR, 12 February 2015).

Cultural Facilities Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-34 (LR, 5 March 2015).

Heritage Act—

Heritage (Council Chairperson) Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-31 (LR, 1 March 2015).

Heritage (Council Deputy Chairperson) Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-32 (LR, 1 March 2015).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-27 (LR, 1 March 2015).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-28 (LR, 1 March 2015).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2015 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-29 (LR, 1 March 2015).

Heritage (Council Member) Appointment 2015 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-30 (LR, 1 March 2015).

Information Privacy Act—Information Privacy Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-6 (LR, 26 February 2015).

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Act—

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Community Sector Employers' Levy Determination 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-22 (LR, 19 February 2015).

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Contract Cleaning Industry Levy Determination 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-21 (LR, 19 February 2015).

Magistrates Court Act—Magistrates Court (Work Health and Safety Infringement Notices) Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-7 (LR, 26 February 2015).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation and Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Medicines Advisory Committee) Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-20 (LR, 13 February 2015).

Official Visitor Act—

Official Visitor (Children and Young People) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-35 (LR, 5 March 2015).

Official Visitor (Disability Services) Appointment 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-18 (LR, 12 February 2015).

Official Visitor (Disability Services) Appointment 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-19 (LR, 12 February 2015).

Planning and Development Act—

Planning and Development (City West Precinct) Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-5 (LR, 19 February 2015).

Planning and Development (University of Canberra) Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1), including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2015-4 (LR, 19 February 2015).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Moncrieff) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-24 (LR, 19 February 2015).

Public Sector Management Act—Public Sector Management Amendment Standards 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-17 (LR, 12 February 2015).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Rules for Sports Bookmaking) Determination 2012 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-38 (LR, 5 March 2015).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Events) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-37 (LR, 5 March 2015).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-33 (LR, 2 March 2015).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-16 (LR, 12 February 2015).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-23 (LR, 19 February 2015).

Road Transport (General) Independent Taxi Operator Exemption Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-26 (LR, 26 February 2015).

Taxation Administration Act—Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Buyback Concession Scheme) Determination 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-39 (LR, 5 March 2015).

Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act 2008— review

Ministerial statement

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.04), by leave: Today I am presenting a statement to the Assembly on the operation and review of the Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act 2008. This is the act under which the ACT's rooftop solar feed-in tariff scheme operates. The act provides feed-in tariff support for small-scale solar generators with a maximum generating capacity of 200 kilowatts. The act was passed in July 2008 and began operation in March 2009.

It has four objectives: (1) to promote the generation of electricity from renewable energy sources; (2) to reduce the ACT's contribution to human-induced climate change; (3) to diversify the ACT's energy supply; and (4) to reduce the ACT's vulnerability to long-term price volatility in relation to fossil fuels.

The scheme was closed to new applicants on 13 July 2011 with existing applicants prior to that date able to progress their installation process in their own time. The feed-in tariffs offered under the act have been, between March 2009 and June 2010: 50.05c per kilowatt-hour for installations up to 10 kilowatts in capacity and 40.04c per kilowatt-hour for installations greater than 10 kilowatts but no more than 30 kilowatts in capacity.

Between July 2010 and May 2011 these feed-in tariff rates were consolidated into a 45.7c per kilowatt-hour rate for all installations up to 30 kilowatts in capacity. From March 2011 to May 2011 a feed-in tariff rate of 34.27c per kilowatt-hour applied to installations greater than 30 kilowatts but no greater than 200 kilowatts. In the last two

days of July 2011 when the scheme was open to new applicants it offered a combined feed-in tariff of 30.16c per kilowatt-hour for all installations up to 200 kilowatts in capacity.

The act has been very successful in meeting its objectives. It has done much to promote renewable energy generation and diversify the territory's energy supply. It has also made a major contribution to mitigating climate change and reducing the ACT's exposure to fossil fuel price volatility. In the eight years before the act began operating, just 24 kilowatts of rooftop solar was installed in the ACT.

But in 2009, when the act came into operation, this rose to 1,967 kilowatts. In 2010 it rose again to 5,224 kilowatts. Then in 2011, the year the feed-in tariff scheme closed, it reached 16,789 kilowatts. By the end of 2011, there was 24,000 kilowatts of rooftop solar capacity in the ACT spread over 10,000 roofs. Solar had come of age in the ACT.

By 2011 the cost of rooftop solar was significantly cheaper than it had been in earlier years and the ACT's rooftop capacity continued to expand, though at a slower rate than in earlier years. Between December 2011 and December 2013, a further 20,000 kilowatts of rooftop solar capacity was added. There are now 15,400 roofs with panels on them in the territory.

These statistics mean that around one in every nine households in the ACT has solar. Together, they generate 62,000 megawatt-hours of electricity, which is an amount equal to around two per cent of our total annual electricity consumption. Some suburbs now have more than 200 rooftop solar systems in place, including suburbs as diverse as Wanniasa, Nicholls, Monash, Kambah, Kaleen, Gordon and Dunlop. Kambah has the greatest capacity, with over 500 systems, totalling 2,300 kilowatts.

The solar output from all the systems now forms part of the territory's 90 per cent by 2020 renewable energy target and is helping to contribute to the ACT achieving its legislated greenhouse gas reduction target. The renewable energy target accounts for around three-quarters of the emission reduction needed for us to reach our legislated 2020 greenhouse gas reduction target.

Section 11A of the act requires the responsible minister to publish monthly reports on the following matters: the number of applications for connection during the month; the number of renewable energy generators connected during the month; the total number of renewable energy generators connected to date; and the total capacity of all micro and medium renewable energy generators connected to date. These reports have been published on the website of the Environment and Planning Directorate each month. The Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission also publishes a quarterly small to medium-scale feed-in tariff activity statement each quarter.

Since the closure of the scheme, households and businesses wishing to install solar panels have been able to access market offers from various retailers that reflect a more modest return on their investment. I am pleased to say that the closure of the feed-in tariff scheme coincided with a period of rapid cost reduction for solar panels. So we have continued to see a good rate of solar installation in the ACT. Whichever way you

look at it, the act has been a huge success. It has taken the ACT from being a solar backwater to a solar powerhouse. I acknowledge the efforts of ministerial colleague Mick Gentleman in being the author of the original legislation.

Section 13 of the act requires that the responsible minister review the scheme within five years of the act's commencement and present a copy of that review to the Assembly after a further six months. This would have had the review tabled in September last year. The Environment and Planning Directorate, which manages the act, has been monitoring and investigating feed-in tariff payment data that has flowed from the act. Earlier this year the directorate advised me that the time frame for completing the review of the act had not been achieved.

Central to the review will need to be a final determination of the amount of installed capacity under the act and the reconciliation with scheme pass-through costs with the uptake of feed-in tariffs at the various rates that were offered through the life of the scheme. Work to collect and assess this data is underway and requires further input from ActewAGL distribution as well as various participating electricity retailers.

In the coming months I intend to bring forward amendments to the act. These amendments will seek to streamline reporting, reflecting the fact that the scheme has entered a mature phase and that the rate of new installations under the scheme has moderated. The amendments will address a process for finalising the scheme and closing off on non-essential requirements for participants.

This act has been a tremendous success in stimulating uptake of rooftop solar for territory households and businesses. I expect the review of the act that I will bring forward later this year will confirm this. I look forward to sharing the outcomes of the review with the Assembly at that time. I present the following paper:

Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act 2008—Review—
Ministerial statement, 17 March 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

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

Disability inclusion statement Ministerial statement

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (4.13), by leave: This government is firmly committed to an inclusive and equal Canberra where people with a disability are supported to reach their full potential. Already the government has made significant progress to improve the lives of people with a disability and we will continue to deliver better outcomes for the 57,500 people with a disability who reside in the ACT.

In this we are guided by the national disability strategy 2010-20, a 10-year national plan to enable people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens in our community. Through the actions of the ACT government we now have a more accessible transport system through a wheelchair accessible taxi booking system and flexible community bus options, and people with a disability, especially those with profound disability, are working in their own businesses.

We have also changed student attitudes around disability through the everyone everyday disability awareness program that received a national disability award in 2014. We are also fortunate to have many people with a disability in our community that are strong champions and innovators of inclusion—people like Jess May, who, with the assistance of an ACT government ICON grant, established an innovative telework labour hire company called Enabled Employment that supports people with a disability to find meaningful and well-paid employment.

Glenn Keys, the 2015 ACT Australian of the Year, has spearheaded Project Independence. It will give people with disability a way to purchase shared equity in their homes. And Sue Salthouse, named the Canberra Citizen of the Year this year, is a strong advocate for people with a disability. These are just three of our local residents who advocate and innovate across our community for people with a disability.

The ACT government is confident and ready to work with people such as Jess, Sue, Glenn and many others with a disability. We will work with them and the community to co-design and implement the territory's next disability policy framework, the ACT disability inclusion statement.

The ACT disability inclusion statement will guide an inclusive Canberra community that enables people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. It will focus on community and government action over the next two years to improve outcomes for people with a disability who live in the ACT. The ACT disability inclusion statement will focus on high level principles, practices and outcomes that align to the national disability strategy. These will be underpinned by key performance indicators that are developed in consultation with the community.

We live in the world's most livable city, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. But, unfortunately, people with disability may not yet enjoy all those benefits equally with other Canberrans. We know that people with disability are less likely to be employed, have lower income levels and have less access to affordable housing options. The ACT disability inclusion statement will set a vision where all people with a disability feel included, reach their potential and can have access to aspects of community life.

There are five priority areas that we will progress under the ACT disability inclusion statement over the next two years. In 2015-16 we propose to focus on housing and employment. We will focus on how government, the community and businesses can work together to create more job opportunities for people with a disability, including self-employment, and strengthen pathways from education to employment for all

young people with disability. Our whole community benefits when we have high levels of economic participation by people with disability. Studies have shown that employees with a disability take fewer days off and have a higher retention rate than other employees.

In 2016-17 we propose to focus on access to justice, accessible communities and improving health outcomes for people with a disability. We will continue to work towards an accessible, responsive and affordable transport system, welcoming accessible social and cultural activities and inclusive health services. We will uphold our strong human rights record and focus on achieving equal access to justice in the area of guardianship and supported decision-making, and find better ways of addressing the over-representation of people with a disability as victims and perpetrators of crime. As the late Stella Young said:

I want to live in a world where we don't have such low expectations of disabled people, that we are congratulated for getting out of bed and remembering our own names in the morning. I want to live in a world where we value genuine achievement for disabled people.

That is from the late, ever-remembered Stella Young. This government sees a future community where we all have high expectations of what people with disability can achieve. The ACT disability inclusion statement will create an online campaign to drive collaborative efforts across Canberra towards the vision for social inclusion and equality. We will shift the emphasis from barriers and exclusion to action and shared responsibility. The campaign will be centred on what is possible for people with disability. We will be looking to recruit inclusion champions to promote and achieve inclusion and equality for all.

We want to bring business and the community with us to achieve this social movement of inclusion and equality. We have had early success with this kind of approach with the ACT Inclusion Council, which comprises business, government and community leaders. We will reach out to members of the Assembly, business and the leaders in the community to become inclusion champions. We welcome policy discussions on how best to achieve an inclusive Canberra community. Separately, we can only achieve small gains for people with a disability but collectively the possibilities are endless.

We will start a policy discussion on the ACT disability inclusion statement—its visions, priorities, implementation principles, governance arrangements, evaluation framework and underpinning campaign methodology—in April of this year. We are aiming to deliver the inclusion statement in the middle of this year.

We will have a bold and ambitious agenda through the disability inclusion statement that will enable people with disability to achieve their goals. We are ready to build a united movement of people with disability, families, government, community and business that will work towards a more inclusive and equal society.

I present the following paper:

ACT Disability Inclusion Statement—Development—Ministerial statement,
17 March 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Business—red tape reduction

Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Madam Speaker has received letters from Dr Bourke, Ms Fitzharris, Mr Hanson, Ms Porter, Mr Smyth and Mr Wall proposing that a matter of public importance be submitted to the Assembly for discussion. In accordance with standing order 79, Madam Speaker has determined that the matter proposed by Dr Bourke be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of having a one stop regulatory approvals process in the ACT.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.21): The ACT government is committed to supporting sustained growth and development of the ACT economy. Canberra continues to be one of the most small-business-friendly cities in Australia. We are doing all we can to stimulate our economy, to build confidence and to seek new investment in the ACT.

In the past, some governments have been particularly good at making businesses, community organisations and individuals jump through hoops to obtain the necessary approvals that will allow them to operate and undertake certain activities. This government understands the case for change, and it acts. We have been listening to our small business community and we are responding.

Often there is duplication of information that businesses are required to provide, such as having to provide names and addresses to multiple government arms for different approvals. One approach to minimise duplication is reviewing our information-sharing mechanisms across different regulators or different levels of government. To this end, the Chief Minister recently announced the creation of Access Canberra, a one-stop shop that brings together most of the ACT government's shopfronts and regulatory arms. Access Canberra will eliminate the need for people to navigate multiple entry points across multiple directorates so that there is no "wrong door" to government. Streamlining access to government, including providing better information-sharing provisions, will give businesses more time to innovate and invest, and contribute to the revitalisation of our city.

As a positive step, Access Canberra's first objective is to help drive innovation and growth into the ACT and better understand business needs when engaging regulatory approval processes and how these processes can be better aligned to provide tangible, practical benefits back to businesses and the community.

Access Canberra will actively support our business community across the full range of regulatory approvals processes, starting with Access Canberra shopfronts, online service portals and call centres, through to our regulators. No longer will people be left to navigate the processes on their own. Access Canberra will take a lead role in coordinating regulatory approval processes to provide a seamless approach for people when dealing with the government. If business or event organisers come up with an idea for something new in the territory, Access Canberra will work with these organisations to make things happen. Access Canberra will be an enabler of innovative and economic activity, not a barrier, while still ensuring that public safety and protection are enforced.

Access Canberra is engaging with the business community to learn how Canberra can do better to streamline services. But we are already making a difference. For example, cafes, bars and restaurants can now obtain information about and apply for an outdoor dining permit through a single web page.

Access Canberra became the single point of contact for organisers of the Art, Not Apart festival this weekend just gone. This was a significant cultural event for the territory, but a complex one for organisers to arrange. Access Canberra not only worked across the ACT government; it also advocated on behalf of the event organisers with external bodies such as the commonwealth National Capital Authority. This is the benchmark for governments supporting businesses and events to get across the line.

Bringing most of our regulators of business together also creates the opportunity to consider developing a streamlined, risk-based regulatory framework for our regulators. A consistent regulatory framework will create certainty for business and let them know where the benchmark for their industry is. This will also foster confidence for the public, in knowing there will be consistency in decision making. When our regulators walk through the door, businesses will know what to expect.

Not only does a single regulatory service approach benefit businesses; there are significant benefits to the broader community from doing business with government. The future vision for Access Canberra customer service shopfronts is to provide a single customer experience that will enable businesses, community organisations and individuals to complete government transactions in one location. As a first step to achieving this goal, the Access Canberra shopfront in Gungahlin, which will be opened in the near future, will offer a number of expanded services that are not currently offered in the Canberra Connect shopfronts. Over time, these services will be rolled out to all the shopfronts across the ACT.

Having all the regulatory approval processes in one place also provides government with a clear picture of the breadth of regulation applied to a particular sector and allows us to quickly identify inefficient regulations and make changes in a timely manner. This will feed into the government deregulation and red tape reduction agenda.

It is important that the ACT government maintains high standards of health, safety and probity for everyone in our community. However, we must also enable businesses and community groups to do great things in our city. This Labor government is dedicated to ensuring that Canberra maintains a vibrant private sector with thriving small, medium and large businesses.

These have been tough times, especially with the uncertainty created by the very unpredictable federal Liberals. We have put in place a range of business support mechanisms. Streamlining and simplifying regulatory approvals and having a one-stop shop process are one of our latest measures. It is a sensible, practical move so that businesses can spend more time doing business and less time seeking permission to do business. If there is a better way of meeting compliance regimes, business should be able to get answers quickly and understand what needs to be done to solve issues.

We want to build on the underlying strength of the ACT economy with the benefits of a business-friendly government, a responsive government and a government in a small jurisdiction in touch with the needs of our stakeholders, the community and private enterprise.

We know that Canberra's economy will enjoy long-term growth, despite some in the very surprising federal Liberal government saying one thing and doing another, chopping and changing direction constantly. The 2014 federal budget of the federal Treasurer, Joe Hockey, came as a shock to all. Like a magician, he thought he was pulling a rabbit from a hat, but it turned out to be a dead duck. It knocked Canberra business confidence back on its heels.

Thankfully, we are building on our underlying strengths, despite the federal government. We do not know where the next federal Liberal budget will take us. I suspect they do not know either, but we have a better idea of their form. I hope they have already done their worst to us here in Canberra.

The ACT Labor government is getting on with managing the Canberra economy for the benefit of the Canberra community in the long term, and we are doing the best we can to weather the obstacles the federal government puts in our way. We are looking to the long-term future of the city, despite the economic uncertainty, through investing in our people, our economy, local jobs and our city. This government, this ACT Labor government, will steer the territory to see the emergence of a stronger, more diverse economy supporting our community.

There are positive signs. The ACT economy is now stronger, more diverse and more resilient compared to 1996, the last time the federal Liberals took an axe to our town. We look forward to growth in the medium to long term, after the current pause, as individuals and businesses take stock and wait to see what further surprises the federal Liberals have in store.

As I mentioned this morning, there is an additional storm cloud on the horizon for small and medium businesses in my electorate around the Belconnen town centre. The federal Liberals are threatening an ill-thought-out proposal to rip the immigration

department out of Belconnen. The immigration department has been one of the major employers in Belconnen for over 30 years, since the new town centre was being developed. The 4,000 workers in Immigration in Belconnen are a major part of the local community and the Belconnen economy. While this ACT Labor government is doing all it can to support small businesses, the federal Liberal proposal for relocating so many long-term workers from Belconnen is a major threat to Belconnen businesses, small and large, that serve and rely on those workers and the department's spending.

The federal Liberal government is fond of calling "sovereign risk" over issues like the mining super-profit tax and other changes. How about they stand up for small businesses, their forgotten people, like this ACT Labor government does, and rule out the arbitrary move of the immigration department from Belconnen.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.31): The question that really needs to be asked is: why do we need to have a single shopfront for ACT government when it comes to business investment—the one-stop shop, as it is being named. Any initiative that makes it easier for a business to open its doors, establish in Canberra, invest in Canberra, create jobs, create wealth and create employment opportunities certainly needs to be encouraged, but after 4,873 days of disruptive Labor governing by the ACT Labor government they have created such a mess, such a web, such a minefield that it is impossible for local businesses to navigate and for local investors—investors from anywhere in the world, for that matter—to look at the ACT as a jurisdiction and say, "I know what I am going to be up for if I want to open my doors and invest or open a business in this territory." It is simply so complicated, with so much red tape, bureaucratic nonsense and impossible regulation, that the government, after 13 years, has now come to the conclusion that the solution is a one-stop shop.

Instead of going in the alternative direction, which is most definitely the position of the Canberra Liberals, and unpicking that red tape, unpicking that regulation and making it easier to encourage investment in this territory, this government has put its hands up and said, "Too hard; let's just have a one-stop shop. We'll give it a flashy name, with a flashy headline, and that will presumably make it easier."

I speak from experience, and I can speak from the experience of constituents, friends and family in this area. One of the biggest bugbears I had prior to entering politics was the issues you have going through the development application process, particularly when you make a merit-based application to ACTPLA and the government has a statutory time to respond to the application and make a determination. What happens when the bureaucrats are going through the criteria? As soon as a red flag comes up, they go, "There's an error." Out of 130 criteria, No 10, say, has a problem. They put the application down. They will send an email or a letter off to the applicant and say, "We need this issue addressed." Not until that issue is addressed does the application get picked up again and looked at—until the next red flag comes up. They do not consider looking at an application with a holistic approach, saying, "All right, there are six or seven areas where we need a bit more information before we can make a decision," putting one request in to the applicant and saying, "Can you come back to us with some more information?" and then turning in the opposite direction to make a final decision. In many instances there is a back and forth five, six, seven, eight or sometimes more times before a decision is made. That

not only undermines the confidence of business but it undermines the efficiency of the bureaucracy.

I can point to a friend who, just in the last week, finalised an application for a food licence. He is opening a new takeaway in Fyshwick. During the process, there were several occasions when a different person would pick up the application and make a different query before the final licence could be approved. I understand that there is a statutory time limit of 10 days to make a determination on an application for a food licence, but it took some weeks just for the fit-out application to be approved before this business could go ahead and start making the fit-out to open their doors to do business in this territory, to employ people, to create opportunities.

Mr Assistant Speaker Bourke, it was probably about five minutes—six minutes if we are generous—before you started slagging off the commonwealth federal government and what you think is happening up there. Perhaps it would be timely to draw some comparisons as to what the Liberals' record is federally compared to the record of the former Labor government.

We will start with a big headline figure that goes to why business confidence is so low in this country, and also this city. That is the budget position. In the final year of the coalition government, there was a \$19.8 billion surplus. When Labor left, there was a \$47 billion deficit. That money has to be repaid from somewhere. Government debt went from \$55.4 billion to \$310 billion. Average GDP under the coalition was 3.6 per cent; under Labor it was 2.5. We are starting to get a picture of why business confidence and the confidence of those that make the wealth, create the job opportunities and create the driving force to grow our economy are often a bit sluggish.

We can look at other areas. It is not necessarily a big one for the ACT, but let us look at manufacturing. At the end of the coalition government in November 2007, there were 1,038,800 people employed in manufacturing, contrasted to the end of the Labor government, when there were 911,000. We have got cuts in manufacturing.

Mr Barr: And how many now that the automotive industry has been shut down?

MR WALL: Why has it been shut down? It is a bit too difficult—

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR WALL: Handouts. Subsidies. That is Andrew Barr's answer. The Treasurer's answer is: "Subsidies. Let's give them money. Government will fund it. Government will prop it up." You should attract the auto industry to Canberra.

Let us look at other areas as to why businesses struggle with confidence. Let us look at your average increases in electricity prices. Between March 1996 and December 2007, the average increase in electricity was 3.1 per cent per year, contrasted to the increases under the last federal Labor government of 12.9 per cent. It is no wonder, and there is no question, that business confidence in this city is struggling.

There were 14,000-odd job cuts under the former Labor government here in the ACT. The wind is being taken out of local businesses' sails simply because they do not know where this government, locally, stands when it comes to supporting business. It is a question that has been left; a lot of businesses have been left wondering. My family business did likewise. As the heat goes out of the market, the economic settings that this government has control of, that the Chief Minister and Treasurer has control of—to stimulate and increase activity in the economy by maybe reducing some taxes or creating some concessions to make it easier for businesses to enter and create that activity—were simply ignored. Many businesses were forced to make those difficult decisions to lay off staff, to close their doors and to go elsewhere.

Let me get back to the subject of today's MPI, a regulatory one-stop shop. All this does is pay further lip-service to the business community. It fails to actually implement the fundamental changes, the fundamental restructuring of the way government does business and the support that government gives to local business that the ACT is much calling out for. This continues to show the contempt that the Treasurer, now Chief Minister, and this government, for the last 4,873 days, have shown for local business, and the government continues to fail to meet those standards.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (4.39): I am very pleased to speak today on the great importance of having a streamlined regulatory approval process in the territory. Every person in Canberra is subject at one point in their lives to some form of regulatory approval process—whether that is registering a significant life event, establishing a business, obtaining a licence, or applying for building approvals—so regulations are important. They protect us from things like unsafe drivers, unsafe food and unsafe buildings. Canberrans should rightly expect to drive safely on the road and to be able to eat safely in restaurants. We always need to make sure the way we regulate actually achieves safety for the public and never becomes a process in box-ticking or burying business in paperwork that does nothing to help make the public safe. One of the great strengths of a one-stop shop for regulatory approvals is that it gives the government a clear picture about the regulatory burden on individuals and businesses. Having this picture is an important step to help us quickly identify and change burdens that do not make sense or stifle innovation.

It is no secret that these are difficult economic times for our city. As you pointed out, Mr Assistant Speaker, the federal government's harsh cuts are, indeed, a threat to jobs in our city. It is up to the territory government to stand up for businesses and workers in this town and do what we can to protect Canberra jobs from those who see no value in Canberra jobs. We know which party that is. Sometimes this will mean supporting the economy directly, and this is something I am very proud our government has been able to achieve with our \$2.5 billion stimulus package. I note that three times in debate today the shadow treasurer and the Leader of the Opposition have indicated they do not support a stimulatory role for the territory government at this time—that we are apparently spending too much and doing too much in the economy.

Opposition members interjecting—

We have just heard by way of interjections the hard right faction of the

young Liberals in Mr Wall and Mr Coe wanting to adopt a policy approach that is really scorched earth when it comes to support of the territory economy.

Sometimes government support comes through providing space for the community and for businesses to innovate, because innovation is essential for Canberra businesses to grow. My government believes Canberra businesses, given the right tools and the right support from government, can compete with anyone in the nation and around the world and win. The job of business in this town is obviously to be out there innovating and growing and not spending time dealing with government paperwork. That is exactly what Access Canberra is about—freeing up business to get on with things. As we stimulate the economy we need to demonstrate confidence by developing and growing emerging enterprises, entrepreneurs and different sectors of the economy to expand our economic base and grow local employment. We simply must promote our city to the region, the nation and the world, and attract new investment and tourism.

Access Canberra is already making a difference inside its first 100 days to help Canberra businesses grow to attract investment and visitors. Our events and festivals are an extremely important contribution to the economic, cultural, sporting and community life of the territory. In addition to our well-known major events, there are approximately 2,000 events of varying sizes held in the territory each year. Organising an event can be complex and time consuming for the organiser. For many events, organisers have found themselves shuttling from one regulator to another to collect all the various approvals they need to run relatively straightforward events. I was determined to respond to this and change the process—and we have.

The regulatory reform panel is also continuing to work closely with community groups and businesses that are in the business of holding public events to make the process even more straightforward. A clear message from the community and from business is that they are experiencing duplication, time delays and additional expenses to collect all the approvals they need. Access Canberra is the answer to this challenge because it provides a one-stop shop. It provides a more supportive regulatory environment and it changes the way business is done in the territory. In the short period Access Canberra has been up and running, we have already helped a range of exciting and innovative events projects get off the ground. For example, Access Canberra coordinated all of the regulatory approvals for the Art, Not Apart festival in New Acton, along Acton beach through to the new west side pop-up. Access Canberra was the single point of contact for the organisers and worked across government to ensure there was a one-stop-shop approach for approvals, ultimately for the success of the event.

Access Canberra is at the beginning of its work and we anticipate and are working towards even more coordination and integrated regulation in Canberra as the entity establishes itself. Its aim is to promote good governance and great service and to help support new and existing businesses and events.

The government's approach to improving the business regulatory environment is multifaceted. In the building and construction sector, we are reviewing the Building Act and the estate development planning process to update these to make them more

relevant and more streamlined. In hospitality we are examining and introducing risk-based regulation for food safety and liquor licensing, and in events coordination we are reducing the burden of regulation where the risks are low. Last year alone the government delivered a range of regulatory and red tape reduction reforms, including the economic stimulus package associated with reforms for the development sector; capital works procurement reforms; the red tape reduction legislation bill last year, with another one coming; improvements to outdoor dining approvals for restaurants and cafes; and reforms in the food safety and public pools areas of regulation.

The government understand the importance of these reforms to our community and to businesses, and we will continue this process of red tape reduction and reducing delays. We will not stop our work on reform of regulations to reduce their burden and to continue to join up regulatory approvals across government. I have to say that the feedback from the organisers of the Art, Not Apart festival, the organisers of the west side park and a number of other businesses since the establishment of Access Canberra has been very positive.

I take the opportunity today to congratulate all of the staff at Access Canberra. They should be celebrating each success in enabling innovators, entrepreneurs and Canberra businesses to achieve their goals. A great task, and a great opportunity, for Access Canberra in the weeks, months and years ahead is to measure its success by the level of innovation and by the speed with which new initiatives and entrepreneurship can be supported and regulatory approvals can be granted. Pulling this together across government for the first time is a significant reform in municipal services for the people of Canberra and one of the more significant achievements in the first 100 days of my chief ministership.

I thank Dr Bourke for raising this matter of public importance today because it is important that we continue to reduce regulation, reduce the regulatory burden on business and continue to make Canberra the most livable city in the world.

Discussion concluded.

Dangerous Substances (Loose-fill Asbestos Eradication) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed from 19 February 2015, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.49): I indicate that the opposition will be supporting this bill. It contains a range of administrative items that will enable the government to deliver on its Mr Fluffy buyback scheme. Amongst other things, the bill contains arrangements to enable the government to create a Mr Fluffy houses register. The bill creates an environment for easy transfer of buyback properties to the government.

Before going to the details of the bill, as I said, we have maintained broadly a spirit of bipartisanship to get Mr Fluffy resolved, so we will be supporting this bill. However, I

indicate that we still have outstanding issues and concerns with the government's buyback scheme, particularly a range of issues that arose from the bipartisan PAC inquiry into Mr Fluffy.

The bill creates the right for the government to efficiently acquire Mr Fluffy houses without, for example, additional and unnecessary processes for those surrendering their homes. To do this, the bill amends nine acts and regulations: the Civil Law (Sale of Residential Property) Act 2003, the Dangerous Substances Act 2004, the Dangerous Substances (General) Regulation 2004, the Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act 2008, the Information Privacy Regulation 2014, the Land Titles Act 1925, the Planning and Development Regulation 2008, the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 and the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011.

The bill allows the minister to create a register of Mr Fluffy houses and identify on that list Mr Fluffy houses that have been acquired by the government. The bill allows but does not require the minister to make the register public. The minister has indicated that the list will be released in the future. I note that that is an issue of particular sensitivity. The bill also has a provision for properties, having been remediated, being removed from the register.

While supporting this measure, it does seem perhaps a little surprising that, having identified the 1,049 Mr Fluffy homes back in the 90s and the seriousness of this issue, a comprehensive register has not been kept to date.

There are some issues around definition. To identify houses to be listed on the register and to be subject to the buyback, the bill defines what are commonly known as Mr Fluffy houses. The bill defines "loose-fill asbestos insulation" as "loose-fill amosite and crocidolite"—good luck pronouncing that one, Chief Minister, in your speech—that was used as ceiling insulation. It helps with facilitating the buyback. One of the cornerstones of the buyback scheme is that the houses surrendered will be demolished and the blocks remediated. It is therefore pointless and a financial burden to expect the usual property documentation relating to building reports and the like to be prepared by sellers.

The bill enables owners who have negotiated solar feed-in tariff rights on their Mr Fluffy homes to transfer those rights to new houses. With respect to tenancies, while many tenants of Mr Fluffy homes have already moved out of affected houses, the bill resolves issues and legalities surrounding the termination of existing tenancies in Mr Fluffy houses.

There are a number of important steps in this bill. We recognise that. It will assist with the process of enacting the government's buyback scheme, which I note a number of people to date have signed on to. Obviously, there are concerns that remain, and I take this opportunity to highlight some of those. Members of this place would be aware that we debated the bill and that there were four members of the committee who unanimously called for a number of recommendations to make this buyback scheme fairer. We heard some harrowing stories on that committee, without doubt. With respect to the problem with the government's scheme, I am not saying that the

scheme does not fit a range of people, as it certainly does. But it is a one-size-fits-all approach to Mr Fluffy that certainly means that a number of people are disadvantaged.

These were, as I said, litigated to an extent in the previous debate that we had in this place on the Mr Fluffy legislation. There were 62 recommendations put forward, but only 16 were agreed to by the government, which means that there are residents out there who are experiencing significant trauma. A number of those issues include people that want to stay in their homes for longer and who are elderly. I know the government has picked a five-year period, but to me that seems arbitrary. If elderly residents are able to remain in their homes, why is it for five years? Why not for a longer period—a period that would allow them to perhaps see out their lives in those homes? It seems that all we are doing is delaying the inevitable.

There is the issue of fairness regarding people who want to return to their blocks but where it is unlikely they will be able to because it will be unaffordable. There is the ever-looming threat from the government, which says that the scheme is voluntary, but, ultimately, the government has said that all the houses will be demolished. So the fear is that if people do not sign on, sometime after 30 June this year there will be a knock on the door, their house will be condemned and those people will suffer a significant financial loss.

We have called for a number of actions from the government to resolve this issue. I reiterate my call for an inquiry into Mr Fluffy. That was certainly a recommendation that came from the bipartisan committee. We need to understand what happened here, what went wrong and have that fulsome inquiry. For many people that would be a very important part of the healing process, not just for them but for the whole community.

We will support this legislation today that gets the business of the buyback scheme moving. I do not resile from the fact that I and my colleagues—and, indeed, members of the public accounts committee, both Liberal and Labor—obviously have some significant concerns that the entirety of the plan as it is structured is somewhat inflexible.

I will touch on another issue. I hope that the Chief Minister, in closing this debate, will go to this. In the last couple of days a number of constituents have come to us who dispute the fact that their homes are Mr Fluffy homes. There are cases where people have bought a block that had a home on it that turned out to be a Mr Fluffy home but they have demolished the home that was there. Maybe a retaining wall or a small element of the subfloor remained, and they built a new home on that block. Essentially, what they have is a completely new home. They have invested a lot of money, a lot of heart and a lot of soul into building a new home on a block, and they are now being told, “That’s a Mr Fluffy home.” They have had numerous checks for amosite asbestos and it has all come up negative. But they have been told that the house has to be demolished.

It seems to me that that is an extreme response that the government needs to look at very closely, because we will end up with something that will be an enormous cost to the individuals concerned and also an enormous cost to the community. If we are

demolishing homes that do not need to be demolished, the question has to be asked: why? That is an area that needs to be explored further. Certainly, I would ask that when the government is approached by individuals in that situation there should be a fulsome response given to those individuals, and a compassionate and reasonable response.

In closing, as I said, we support the bill. There are outstanding questions. We will continue to engage with the government and with the task force to, regardless of the shape of the legislation, make sure that our constituents are properly informed and, where they have concerns, they are raised with the appropriate authorities.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.59): The Greens will support the Dangerous Substances (Loose-fill Asbestos Eradication) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which will help facilitate the government's loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme, or the Mr Fluffy buyback program, as it is more commonly known. It is unsurprising that a scheme as significant as this would require some amendments to the law to ensure it can operate practically for both the owners of the properties and the government.

As I have said before in this place, I support the government's buyback program. A great deal of effort has gone into finding a solution that is both equitable and achievable. Taking action to address the Mr Fluffy legacy is vital to offer a solution to those who are affected so that they can repair, rebuild and get on with their lives, as well as to remove the toxic legacy from Canberra so that no-one else will have to endure the hardship of living in a Mr Fluffy contaminated house.

I note the remarks Mr Hanson has just made, and I share his view that we should also be looking to ensure that we do strive for flexibility. Certainly I have raised a number of matters with the task force along those lines. As they are working through this program and new circumstances are coming up, some degree of flexibility is needed, and it is a matter of trying to draw an appropriate line between flexibility and the affordability of the scheme. That will be an ongoing challenge that we need to continue to address.

The amendments in the bill will allow for the creation of a register of properties affected by Mr Fluffy contamination. Properties will be removed from the list if they are purchased and remediated by the government. It makes sense to create this formal register. It will assist with administration of the buyback scheme. Any premises listed on the register will also have this noted on the title of the land, which will mean prospective buyers will be aware of this fact.

At some stage the register may be made public. The bill allows the minister to do this. In any case, the changes to the territory plan and the demolition process conducted as part of the buyback program will make it obvious to the community which blocks had Mr Fluffy contamination. Noting that Mr Fluffy contamination poses a health risk to the broader community as well as to individual residents, there is also merit in allowing the register to become public so that members of the community will know the risk posed by certain premises.

The bill will allow landlords or tenants in Mr Fluffy houses to terminate a residential tenancy agreement where the premises are affected premises—that is, where they contain Mr Fluffy asbestos and have not been demolished or remediated by the government—outside the usual process governed by the Residential Tenancies Act. Again, given the real health issues that we know accompany the presence of Mr Fluffy, this is an appropriate change. For tenants, it will allow them to leave the property quickly. For landlords, it will facilitate them surrendering the lease to the territory if they want to be part of the buyback program. As Mr Barr noted in his introduction speech, tenants will be provided with assistance through the task force, such as financial assistance if they are required to relocate at short notice. The ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal has jurisdiction to resolve issues that might arise in these unique termination circumstances.

The bill also exempts the territory from the Civil Law (Sale of Residential Property) Act in relation to the buyback of Mr Fluffy houses. This will remove unnecessary burdens and provision of documents. Many of the required documents relate to the building, which in this case will be demolished. As an example, there is no point doing an energy efficiency rating on a property which is going to be demolished anyway.

Lastly, the bill also amends the Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act 2008 to ensure that Mr Fluffy home owners who had solar panels on their houses can either transfer their systems to a new property and maintain the tariff or potentially install a new system at their new premises and continue with their feed-in tariff contract.

It has become clear that there is not a perfect outcome to suit everyone on the transferring of solar, but I think this amendment will ensure that the bulk of people's needs are being met, with the least cost disadvantage. For people who were able to easily remove their systems and then safely reinstall them on their new properties, the current electricity feed-in tariff legislation would have sufficed, as that scenario is already accounted for in the act, in section 11(2)(b).

The trouble has emerged for either (a) people who cannot safely remove their solar systems from their houses—and this might be because the panels, or more likely the inverters, are wall-mounted on cavity walls affected by loose-fill asbestos—or (b) those whose solar systems do not currently meet safety standards because the standards have been changed and upgraded since their systems were installed.

Changes to standards in the last few years have occurred at a national level and relate to fire ratings on panels, amongst other things. Some people's panels from their old systems are likely to have met the new standards anyway and can therefore be easily reinstalled, but some people may find that their 2009 panels do not meet the new standards.

There were a few different ways of managing these situations, including whether or not exemptions from the standards could be granted or the systems could be ground-mounted or garage-mounted. But this provision provides another possibly

easier option that will not disadvantage home owners significantly; that is, if home owners find that they are not able to reuse their old solar panels they will be able to buy a new system for their house and then continue the feed-in tariff contract that they had in their previous premises.

There will be an outlay in the purchase of a new system. However, the cost of solar systems has come down quite significantly over the past five to six years, so the outlay will be less. Most owners with old panels would be on a higher feed-in tariff rate, perhaps as high as 50c per kilowatt hour, so the payback on the cost of a new system will be relatively shorter than for their original system.

There is, of course, the lost capital on the old system, but that will be included in the valuation of the house for the purposes of the scheme—although, of course, the extra value this would add to the house is uncertain and it may not meet the initial cost of the panels.

While it is difficult to predict every scenario that might come up in regard to the transfer of solar systems, I think this provision seeks to provide a fair and balanced response for home owners. I certainly thank those home owners who have written to me on this issue because it has enabled me to raise a series of questions with the task force about these various scenarios. I would also like to thank the task force for applying themselves to yet another issue among the many that have come up in the course of this case. We have managed to work through this to find a system that I believe will suit most people who have a solar system and want to retain it, move it or replace it if necessary.

With those few remarks, I support the bill today and appreciate the chance to speak about it.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (5.06): As the minister responsible for workplace safety, I am well aware of the dangers posed by asbestos, and this bill is another in the growing list of examples confirming the government's commitment to protecting the community from exposure. As I have previously stated in the Assembly, I am extremely proud to be in a government that is taking such a firm stance on asbestos safety. The government will no longer accept complacency about asbestos. Although the risks of contracting an asbestos-related disease are relatively low, the consequences can be terrible.

Recent changes to the work health and safety and dangerous substances legislation, most of which came into effect on 1 January this year, have helped to enhance asbestos safety regulation in the territory. The asbestos safety reform package passed by the Assembly last year adopted the national harmonised asbestos safety model regulations with a small number of significant adaptations to preserve the territory's strong stance on asbestos safety; consolidated relevant asbestos-related definitions into the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011; transferred the licensing function for asbestos assessors and removalists to work health and safety laws, as is the case with other high risk work licences; and retained current duties in the Dangerous

Substances Act 2004 insofar as they apply to situations not covered by the work health and safety laws, including do-it-yourself home renovations.

One of the key components of adopting the national model asbestos regulations is that WorkSafe ACT must now be notified five days prior to asbestos removal activities taking place. This new notification provision allows the safety regulator to be increasingly proactive in its oversight of asbestos removal through early engagement in the process. WorkSafe ACT is also responsible for enforcing the government's decision to no longer allow the removal of up to 10 square metres of non-friable asbestos, or asbestos contaminated dust, without an asbestos removal licence.

Last year the territory also mandated an asbestos awareness training course that must be undertaken by workers who carry out or may carry out work involving asbestos. A list of occupations that must undertake this training course was also declared. This gives workers the knowledge to identify material containing asbestos and is a vital first step in increasing asbestos safety in the territory.

In keeping with the government's commitment to protect the health and safety of territory workers, the purpose of this bill is to increase workers' asbestos awareness of locations where there is a known risk of potential exposure. The bill amends the Dangerous Substances Act 2004 and requires the minister to maintain a register of residential premises that contain or have contained loose-fill asbestos insulation. While I appreciate there are concerns among some home owners who are worried about their privacy once the register is made public, we need to appreciate that a legitimate public interest is at stake. As minister for workplace safety my primary focus is that tradespeople are fully informed of potential future exposure to asbestos as well as potential exposure in the past. By maintaining a register of affected residential premises, we are able to make one of the most powerful work health and safety tools—information—readily available to the people who need it when they need it.

The bill builds on changes to the Dangerous Substances (General) Regulation 2004, requiring warning signs to be displayed at affected premises. This requirement commenced on 1 January this year, and tradespeople who attend premises can readily ascertain whether the premises are affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation by looking at the electricity meter box and the switchboard. The current amendments before the Assembly serve a broader function in that this information is available to tradespeople and also to their employers at a point in time well before they physically attend the premises. This information allows appropriate precautions to be taken. Importantly for tradespeople, the register will allow workers who have carried out renovation jobs on older houses in the past to check whether any of those houses were affected by loose-fill asbestos and whether they have potentially been exposed to loose-fill asbestos in the past.

One thing to note is that while the information mechanisms such as the affected residential premises register and the warning stickers on electricity meter boxes are in place, this does not absolve a home owner from their responsibility to inform tradespeople, tenants or potential buyers that the home is affected by loose-fill

asbestos and provide a copy of the asbestos assessment report on the home where necessary.

In considering the implications of the bill, members should understand that protecting workers today will reduce the health impacts of asbestos in the years to come. The federal government publication, *Asbestos: A Guide for Householders and the General Public* states that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres. Our focus must therefore be on preventing this exposure as this is the only true means of preventing asbestos-related diseases.

Recent decisions taken by the government should put beyond doubt our commitment to minimising as far as possible the risks of asbestos exposure in the community. I strongly support the passage of this bill as it will assist in protecting the safety of those of us who live and work in the Canberra community. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (5.12), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate and conclude the debate by again stating very clearly the ACT government's commitment to providing an enduring solution to the Mr Fluffy legacy through the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme. The scheme enables the owners of affected houses to sell their properties to the territory, which will then allow us to safely demolish them and resell the vacant blocks.

This bill, as previous speakers have indicated, seeks to minimise the stress placed on affected home owners and ensure an effective process by streamlining the purchase of affected properties through the buyback program component of the scheme. It also seeks to amend a number of existing acts in order to remove red tape and unnecessary procedure. This is done in recognition that affected home owners and families need to recover and to be able to move on as quickly as possible.

Through amendments to the Dangerous Substances Act 2004, the bill provides for a register of affected residential premises. Having such a register in place will help in the administration and with the processes surrounding Mr Fluffy homes following the close of the government's buyback program. It will also facilitate the longer term management of properties where owners choose not to participate in the buyback program.

The amendments provide that the minister may make the register of affected residential premises publicly available. I am aware a number of historical and inaccurate versions of the list of affected houses are already in circulation. The register being publicly available as the official list will enable people to make informed decisions about buying or renting a property. It will also enable tradespeople to find out whether they have previously worked on a Mr Fluffy residence and have potentially been exposed to loose-fill asbestos insulation fibres.

Where people are renting a property that is a Mr Fluffy residence, amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 will allow them to terminate their tenancy agreement

so that they can move elsewhere. Under the amendments, landlords will also be able to terminate a tenancy agreement for Mr Fluffy houses. Support for tenants is available, including financial assistance if they are required to move at short notice.

The bill also seeks to remove unnecessary requirements where the territory is purchasing a unit titled property through the buyback program. As these properties cannot be acquired through the lease surrender mechanism, they must be purchased through normal contractual arrangements. Under the Civil Law (Sale of Residential Property) Act 2003, this would require the commissioning of various reports that are mandated in the interests of consumer protection for buyers and vendors. However, as the territory is acquiring these properties for the sole purpose of demolition, such requirements add limited value whilst, of course, increasing the cost and time to sell for owners who wish to participate in the buyback program. By removing these requirements we streamline the buyback process, which assists those owners and families in moving on as quickly as possible.

The bill seeks amendments to the Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act 2008 so that those owners of affected houses who have been participating in the legislative feed-in tariff scheme will be able to continue these arrangements. Affected home owners who have a micro renewable energy generator connected under the legislative feed-in tariff scheme will not be disadvantaged through having to leave the generator on the premises when they surrender it to the territory. They will be able to retain their 20-year contracts for the premium feed-in rate if they have a generator affixed to their new property.

The loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme has been put in place to provide an enduring solution to the legacy of Mr Fluffy. In developing and implementing the scheme the government is aware of the impact on affected home owners and their families as well as the impact on their neighbours and the broader community. We are seeking to make the process as smooth as possible to minimise distress for everyone.

To help affected home owners, the asbestos response task force has engaged with entities such as the banks, ActewAGL and the Australian Taxation Office to minimise the burden on individuals. A personal support team is also available to help individuals and families through the process. Members of the personal support team are based at local community centres in Woden, Kippax, Dickson and Tuggeranong. They are there on dedicated days each week to provide face-to-face contact and assistance.

The amendments proposed in this bill play an important part in supporting everyone affected by making it easier and quicker for home owners to participate in the buyback program and assisting home owners and affected tenants in moving to a new home. Through the amendments contained in this bill, we seek to assist our community in getting through this challenging experience quickly and to enable affected individuals to move on with their lives.

Before I close, the Leader of the Opposition raised a couple of questions in his contribution. The first relates to properties where there has been a demolition and a rebuild of a new house. In those instances, of course where there is no asbestos

present those properties are not included on the list. I might add that we have had some approaches from people wanting the properties to be included on the list where there has been a knock-down and a rebuild and no asbestos is present or asbestos that would be present is buried beneath a concrete slab of a new property. In those circumstances, common sense prevails and those properties are not included in the buyback scheme. The point the Leader of the Opposition makes is noted, but I respond by observing that there are people who want their properties in and people who want their properties out, and the task force has to have a consistent approach.

Finally, I make the observation that it will not be the government devaluing properties; it will be the market. These properties will have no value; the houses will have no value. If people choose not to participate in the buyback scheme by 30 June, when they can register for a valuation, the properties will have no value. It will be the market that determines that, not the government. Of course, the land will still have value, and what a potential purchaser might be prepared to pay in the private market for the value of the land will be a retained value for those who own the properties. But the house itself the market will determine to have no value. In fact, it will be a drag, if you like, on the land value because a potential purchaser of a particular dwelling would then have to knock it down and rebuild. A rational consumer would then only pay the value of the land minus the cost of a knock-down. That is a reality.

The government is offering through the voluntary buyback scheme something in advance of that—the value of the home as if there was no asbestos present, plus the land value. That is the benefit and why 90 per cent of householders are participating in the buyback scheme. I certainly encourage those who are yet to register for a valuation to do so. It does not commit them to accepting an offer from the government, but at least it provides them with an understanding of what the government offer would be. Registering for that process is open all the way through until 30 June. I note the latest statistics show that more than 900 of the 1,021 properties have now registered. The government has made offers on more than 600, and as recently as this week I understand we now own more than 200 properties.

The buyback scheme is working effectively and the government, through the asbestos task force, will continue to support affected households. It will continue to move quickly to respond to individual circumstances, recognising that across 1,021 properties there will be a wide variety of different individual circumstances. The task force is working very closely with individual households in order to respond to individual issues that have been raised. I encourage any member of the Assembly who has received approaches to refer any concerns through me to the task force, and I will ensure that the task force is in contact with affected households as quickly as possible to work through all of the issues, recognising that not everyone will be 100 per cent happy. There is no way any buyback scheme on this scale will keep everyone 100 per cent happy all the way through. But I am pleased with the progress of the scheme. I acknowledge the hard work of the task force and all of the ACT public servants who are working very hard to assist affected home owners. I again take the opportunity to thank all members in this place for their support of this legislation and, indeed, for the buyback scheme. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion by **Mr Barr** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms Tara Costigan

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.24): Many of us are now familiar with the name Tara Costigan, a young woman who died in tragic circumstances recently. But there was much more to Tara Costigan than what you may have read in the paper. Tara was a mother, daughter, granddaughter, niece, cousin, aunt, sister, friend and colleague to many. Some of her family members are here with us today to hear this tribute to Tara's life.

Tara's most important role was as mother to two boys, Rhiley and Drew, and to a baby girl, Ayla, just a week old at the time of Tara's death. Her son Rhiley said she was the best mum in the world. Tara loved to have fun with her kids and worked hard to send them to a private school and give them whatever they needed.

In childhood Tara displayed a tendency to lead with her head, which meant stitches and the nickname "Turkey". Her own father died when she was young, but Tara had a large extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who stepped in and who remained close.

Tara loved the Balmain Tigers, her cats and her dog. She loved the colour blue and dolphins. She worked in child care as a swimming instructor—and, more recently, in aged care, which she enjoyed immensely and those in her care benefited from.

Tara Costigan was fun loving, warm and caring. Tara was loved and will be remembered by her children, grandmother, uncles, aunts, sister, nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and colleagues.

Tara Costigan died a day after seeking and gaining an interim domestic violence order against the man now charged with her murder. She was just 28 years old. Her sister and brother-in-law were also injured in the attack.

Tara Costigan was a mother, daughter, granddaughter, niece, cousin, aunt, sister, friend and colleague. She has become symbolic of any mother, daughter, granddaughter, niece, cousin, aunt, sister, friend or colleague of any of us, in that she has, terribly, recently become the public face here in Canberra of the terrible toll that domestic and family violence takes on our community. I have been very saddened to

hear today that we may have seen another tragic death in our community from domestic violence.

After Tara's death, her cousin Nathan, in a heartbreaking yet inspirational message, wrote: "One positive point, if that's possible, is that this tragedy has again raised the issue of domestic violence and that it is very real in our community." The Costigan family are taking a positive approach—that together we are stronger. And they are setting up a foundation in Tara's name.

There have also been a number of fundraising initiatives to raise money for Tara's children. Thanks so much to those involved—for example, Tara's Angels on GoFundMe, especially Emma Luke, an appeal which has already raised over \$100,000; the Fox and Bow cafe in Farrer; Little Billy's restaurant; and Meyer Vandenberg Lawyers. I would also like to note a fundraising walk this Sunday around Lake Burley Griffin which aims to have people stand up against domestic violence. It is organised by Stevie Barrie of Canberra Mums Exercise Group, of which Tara was a member.

The Domestic Violence Crisis Service here in the ACT is available for anyone who needs help. You can also call the 1800RESPECT hotline or Lifeline on 131 114. There are a number of other fantastic services here in the ACT who help women and their children leaving violent situations, such as Beryl Women Inc, Victim Support ACT and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Wesnet, the White Ribbon campaign and Our Watch for their systemic advocacy in the domestic and family violence space.

But the message I really want everyone here to take away with them today is this: when you think of Tara Costigan, please remember her not as a victim or a statistic; she was a beautiful, funny, loving woman—a mother, daughter, granddaughter, niece, cousin, aunt, sister, friend and colleague to many—and she will be remembered with love.

Aunty Judy Harris

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (5.30): I wish to acknowledge the passing last Monday, 9 March, of Aunty Judy Harris. Aunty Judy's funeral was held this morning at the Holy Spirit Catholic Church at Amaroo and was attended by members of the government's Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

Aunty Judy was a great champion of Aboriginal health care in the ACT and a pioneer of important services which are provided today. Almost from its inception, through until December last year, Aunty Judy was the chair of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. Her dedication in this role was matched by her knowledge and leadership. She saw the service grow from humble beginnings to a workforce of 60 people today, providing vital services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across our nation.

It is fitting that in this week of National Close the Gap Day we can honour the life of someone who dedicated much of her life to reducing inequalities in health care and life expectancy. Her contribution through this work was recognised nationally in 2009 through her awarding of the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the ACT community.

Just as importantly—perhaps even more so—the value of her work is shown in the countless lives which have benefited from vital local health services. The depth and emotion of the tributes which have flowed in the past week showed how respected and loved she was in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

I pay tribute to Aunty Judy as a leader and fearless advocate of equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in health care and in life. I wish to pass on my condolences to her family and friends. Aunty Judy leaves an enduring legacy in our community.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.32): I, too, rise to pay tribute to Judy Harris. Many Canberrans celebrated Judy Harris's life at a requiem mass in Amaroo this morning after she passed away last week. Judy was an elder of the Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal country. She was a mother, a wife and a sister, and I pay my respects to all her family and those who knew and loved her over her life of almost 70 years.

She is widely known in the Canberra community as one of the stalwarts of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. While Canberra was celebrating its centenary in 2013, Winnunga was celebrating its first quarter of a century. For most of that time Judy served on the board of Winnunga and chaired the board for two decades, only stepping down in December last year due to ill health. Winnunga Nimmityjah grew from a temporary medical service at the tent embassy in 1988 to now managing a budget of over \$8 million. Over that time it was located in the old Griffin Centre in Civic, in Wakefield Gardens, Ainslie, and in 2004 it moved to its current site in Boolimba Crescent, Narrabundah.

As chair of the board Judy Harris was integral to Canberra's own Aboriginal community-controlled health service. Likewise, Winnunga Nimmityjah is integral to Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The service is owned by the community and managed by the community, making it a welcoming place for clients seeking its holistic care. Winnunga Nimmityjah is part of a movement that has seen over 130 Aboriginal health services under community control grow up over the last 40 years. The holistic care of humans extends beyond the strict limits of a medical model.

Judy and Winnunga never shied away from taking up causes on behalf of the community and supporting its most vulnerable members. In recent years Winnunga Nimmityjah had taken on commemoration of the stolen generations with the annual Sorry Day bridge walk over Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. The event has grown each year from strength to strength. One of my lasting memories of Judy Harris will be marching next to her on the bridge walk. She took obvious joy in mixing with the young and old members of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

She knew everyone and was very comfortable and passionate in her role as an elder, sharing her knowledge and passing on the banner to the next generations. She will be greatly missed.

Communities@Work

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.34): On 25 February I was pleased to welcome members of the board of Communities@Work on a visit to the Legislative Assembly. This visit is another in my program to raise the profile of the Assembly with the community sector, and this program was endorsed last year by the Assembly's estimates committee. The Assembly's hardworking education officer, Neal Baudinette, hosted board members in an orientation session in the chamber followed by a tour of the building and its art works and concluded with a reception in the Speaker's hospitality room.

I was pleased to be able to welcome a number of fellow MLAs to the reception, in which there was plenty of lively and engaging discussion. Following the reception I was pleased to make the hospitality room available to the board for its regular monthly meeting.

There will be similar visits by other community groups during the year, and I encourage members to attend as many as possible. They require only about 45 minutes of your time but they are invaluable for the informal connections that they make with people in our community who contribute so much, mostly in a voluntary capacity. I always receive very positive feedback from people who perhaps have never visited the Assembly but also for the opportunity they get to meet their political representatives in an informal setting.

As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, Communities@Work is Canberra's largest community service organisation offering a wide range of services for people in our community across all age groups. Included are services in the areas of childcare, youth, family, seniors, disability, mental health, community development, community centres, transport, education, food rescue and the famed Galilee school.

The chair, Mr Archie Tsirimokos, heads a board of leaders in our community, all of whom are passionate about the vision of Communities@Work to be "a resilient and socially inclusive community that cares for the wellbeing of all". This vision drives the mission of Communities@Work "to deliver quality community services of social value and practical benefit". Mr Tsirimokos's deputy is Mr John Nicholl, with treasurer Ms Gail Kinsella, and board members Mr John Runko, Mr Mike Sullivan, Ms Caron Egle, Ms Ayesha Razzaq, Mr Eoghan O'Byrne, and my own senior adviser, Mr Clinton White, who clocks up 10 years of service on the board this year.

Members of the board also sit on a number of board committees, including an audit and finance committee, a fundraising committee and a risk management committee, and there are others. The CEO of Communities@Work is the very highly talented and highly respected Ms Lynne Harwood, who comes from a long background in the community sector, including HomeHelp Services and Galilee. Ms Harwood heads a team of over 1,000 staff and volunteers turning over more than \$30 million each year.

Interestingly, less than 30 per cent of the funding for Communities@Work comes from government. Since becoming CEO, Ms Harwood has overseen an amalgamation of Communities@Work and Galilee and a merger with Gungahlin community service. Her team provides specialist but fully integrated services to more than 20,000 clients each year.

Communities@Work is a leader in Canberra's community sector. They provide a vital service through a wide range of innovative programs and fill many of the cracks through which people in our community might otherwise fall. I congratulate them on their work and wish them every success in the future.

Catholic Schools Week

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (5.38): Last Thursday morning my Assembly colleagues Speaker Vicki Dunne, Alistair Coe, Meegan Fitzharris, myself, Mary Porter and Chris Bourke, along with Monsignor John Woods, the Vicar General of Catholic Education, had the pleasure of attending a breakfast celebration of Catholic Schools Week at St Michael's Primary School in Kaleen.

As in past years since 2009, as shadow minister for education I have joined with the students, parents, teachers and many other members of the school and parish community, and many colleagues from the ACT Assembly, to attend this annual event. Madam Deputy Speaker, you may well ask why we keep coming back. Speaking for myself, I always accept the invitation because this is a special event, an inspirational event at a special school.

Started over nine years ago by David Austin, the then principal, this event has grown into one that has come to be a special symbol of Catholic Schools Week each year. Mrs Judy Walsh, the principal for the past five years, her enthusiastic teaching and admin staff, and the students and parents have carried on building and enhancing that legacy.

St Michael's Primary School Kaleen is a Catholic systemic school catering for 215 students and their families. Currently, they have nine classes from kindergarten to year 6. Over the years Judy Walsh has told us that at St Michael's the staff, the students and the parish strive to provide an integrated approach to education. The community integrates their faith with contemporary life, and gospel values are reflected in their policies, structures and relationships.

While parish administrator Father Warwick Tonkin and parish pastoral assistant Sister Kate McMahon provide support and assistance to the parish, staff, students and families, they also assist in building a strong relationship between the parish and the school by supporting the delivery of religious education through involvement in the sacramental and class programs. The school acknowledges parents as prime educators in their child's education. The school community council and the parent representative network, the PRN, form a link between the classroom and the students' parents.

St Michael's motto is "Live in harmony". It symbolises their desire to live in harmony with God, self, others and the environment. Last week, St Michael's Kaleen was once again one of the more than 615 Catholic schools across New South Wales and the ACT to celebrate Catholic Schools Week. I know from past experience at St Michael's how very proud they are of their history and the many achievements to date, the excitement and the challenges that St Michael's growing school community generates while continuing to evolve to meet the diverse and complex educational needs of the current generation of young people.

There is also a particular focus on developing innovative and creative learning experiences and environments. St Michael's Primary School is well placed to look ahead with hope and confidence to be able to meet the learning needs of future generations of children for many years to come. And that is the theme for 2015 Catholic Schools Week: "Catholic schools: educating for today and tomorrow."

I congratulate principal Judy Walsh and her dedicated teachers, students, parents, the parish and the school communities on their contribution to Catholic education and thank them once again for sharing their event with all of us during Catholic Schools Week.

Sport—events

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.42): I rise tonight to reflect on some recent sporting events taking place around the community that I have been able to attend, particularly a range of multicultural community sporting events. I mention these because in respect of each of them a particular part of our community has gone to some effort to put the event on and really brought a fun spirit to these matches.

We have had the Canberra cricket sixes, played at Nicholls playing field on 8 February. I would like to congratulate in particular Daminda Solangarachchi from Canberra's Sri Lankan community for organising that event. We also had the ACT mini multicultural cricket world cup. I attended the final at Lyneham on Saturday, 22 February. This was made up of a range of communities, including the Indian, Pakistani and Irish teams and an Indigenous team. I would particularly like to acknowledge Krishna Nadimpalli from the Federation of Indian Associations in the ACT, who was a driving force behind that one.

In cricket, I would also like to mention the Akram-Tendulkar shield T20 cricket and the friendship cup event, which took place at Holt on Monday, 9 March. Ms Fitzharris was also at that event. I would particularly like to acknowledge Syed Jaffry from Sports for Health and Wellbeing for Indians and Pakistanis—SHIP—for putting the effort into organising that event. I must say that at that event the teams looked particularly resplendent in their full international team uniforms, exactly reflecting the Indian and Pakistani teams playing in the World Cup.

Each of these cricket matches was also strongly supported by Cricket ACT through the provision of umpires and other support. All of them brought many of our migrant communities together here in Canberra in a fun spirit of friendship as well as, I might

say, a bit of healthy competition. The players were playing as hard as they could to win those matches.

Ms Fitzharris was also at the Punjabi Traditional Sports Festival, which I attended at Deakin oval on Saturday, 7 March. That was a busy weekend. I would like to particularly acknowledge Harjinder Singh Dhindsa, President of the Canberra Punjabi Sports and Cultural Association. That was a particularly terrific event to see the Punjabi community coming together to organise very traditional sports being played on Deakin oval right next to Adelaide Avenue.

I think most people driving past would not have realised what was going on, but it was for me a fascinating occasion. I have never been to a Punjabi sports festival. There were some particularly impressive performances at that event. This is the first year that the event has been held. I have great confidence that it will continue to grow over coming years.

Finally, I would like to mention the family fun and sports day which took place at Woden Park at the new athletics track on Saturday, 14 March for the Canberra Malayalees Association, representing a particular Indian community here in Canberra. Again, many hundreds of families turned out for this event. They actually had a whole range of athletics events on the track there. It was great to see the track being used not just for the more serious athletes who are out there competing all the time but for a community association using this wonderful new facility constructed by the ACT government for a community day like this. I would also like to acknowledge the community who put together that wonderful event. I note that Mr Coe was there as well. I was pleased to chat with him at that event.

I simply wanted to acknowledge some of these events and to reflect to the Assembly the enormous range of things that are going on in our community. I think that all of us know this, but I particularly thank the organisers for their effort in putting these events together, because they take some considerable planning and conduct. Each of them brought a great deal of joy to those who turned up to participate.

HerCanberra

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (5.46): I rise today to talk about HerCanberra, a popular website started by local Canberran Amanda Whitley in January 2011. HerCanberra was designed to connect Canberrans, particularly women, with their city and with each other. Last week I was honoured to attend an exciting launch of their free hard-copy magazine called *Magazine*. The event attracted around 150 people, and it was a celebration not only of HerCanberra's expansion from online to hard-copy media but also of Canberra and the contribution of women to our city.

It was also a significant milestone for HerCanberra and a demonstration of the strength of our economy that such successful local businesses can flourish. My hope is that Amanda's example will encourage more Canberrans to follow their passion in a uniquely Canberra way.

Amanda was an executive in the Australian public service when the premature birth of her youngest daughter meant that she needed to take extended leave from paid work to look after her daughter at home. She found herself isolated and mostly housebound, caring for an unwell baby and her big sister, who was two at the time. Looking to connect with others, both in Canberra and across the country, she came across the burgeoning community of “Mummy bloggers”. Amanda came across the website Mamamia and soon became a contributor and moderator.

After about a year, Amanda had the idea to start a multi-contributor website which would showcase the talents of local Canberra women and focus on life in Canberra. HerCanberra is not a hard news site or, at the other end of the extreme, the equivalent of the social pages, but contains stories that would encourage people to see just how much this city has to offer. So HerCanberra was born.

Last week at the launch of *Magazine*, Amanda expressed her gratitude to family, friends and the HerCanberra community, and especially her husband, who encouraged her to turn her idea into a reality.

Today HerCanberra boasts around 70 contributors and has over 65,000 monthly readers. I have been one of them for a number of years. At the launch and in the lead-up I had the opportunity to speak with a couple of the contributors. They were women who were keen to express themselves creatively and extend themselves beyond their usual home and work routine.

In contributing to HerCanberra, the women are reaching out and creating their own community, not connected by immediate geography but, rather, by interest, sharing information and experiences with like-minded Canberrans. The website reviews and promotes local businesses, including restaurants and cafes, fashion, beauty and fitness providers, through to pieces about women’s contributions to Canberra, politics, religion and our identity.

The success of HerCanberra underscores the value of online forums in connecting people. As Canberra grows and people are less likely to know their neighbours or join community groups, online communities fulfil a social inclusion function, allowing people with different schedules and commitments to still “meet” in a central place. As many commentators note, social capital in Australia is changing and diminishing. Whether a forum connects people of a certain demographic, such as women or Canberrans, or people with interests in fitness or food, they offer real social capital possibilities for people to get in touch and share their experiences.

Amanda has grown HerCanberra from an idea in her head. As she said last week, “I told my husband about it and he said, ‘It’s a great idea. Go for it.’” Such a simple idea, through much hard work, has turned into something great. It has delivered content every day for three years, which is amazing in itself, but it is the connections and conversations that have followed where some of the real value lies. Amanda is also a fiercely proud advocate for Canberra, often uncovering more and more of its treasures and sharing them widely.

To her enormous credit, Amanda has maintained a very inclusive and positive mood across the site and in everything she does. At times social media can be a nasty environment. HerCanberra has none of that, and that is no accident but a tribute to Amanda and her team's approach.

HerCanberra also demonstrates the very best of what Amanda calls the "hyperlocal", merging it with new technology and what I believe is our community's innate desire to connect, share and learn. It also demonstrates that although online tools can be viewed as disruptive technology, women across Australia are making the most of it. Mumpreneurs like Amanda are making the most of this technology and, as in HerCanberra's experience, are using an online platform to deliver a very old-fashioned product—a hard-copy magazine.

HerCanberra's growth and reach is a fantastic example of another successful Canberra business, to add to the list we have discussed here today. It is also a fantastic example of so much that is great about our city. Two key features of the newly launched *Magazine* were a feature on "What Katy Does Next", about our former Chief Minister Katy Gallagher, and also a feature on 15 Canberra women to watch in 2015. I was honoured to be named as one of these women and especially enjoyed meeting the others. I hope the connections we made through this experience will endure, and I look forward to talking more about each of them throughout this week.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.51 pm.