



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**EIGHTH ASSEMBLY**

**18 MARCH 2015**

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**Wednesday, 18 March 2015**

**The Assembly met at 10 am.**

**MADAM SPEAKER** (Mrs Dunne) took the chair and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

## **Domestic violence**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that:
  - (a) about 130 000 women around Australia have suffered violence in one form or another from their current or former partner in the past 12 months alone;
  - (b) the recent tragic death in the ACT has seen a spike in calls for support to the ACT's Domestic Violence Crisis Service, which is already struggling with a 40 per cent increase in total contacts in five years and a near doubling of crisis visits in two years; and
  - (c) the system's future will be shaped in a crucial Council of Australian Governments meeting in July that will look at a national domestic violence order scheme, better and more integrated support for women, and stronger ways to target the perpetrator;
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to establish a roundtable supporting a bi-partisan approach to tackling domestic and family violence in the ACT; and
- (3) notes that the roundtable would:
  - (a) bring together the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, police experts, support workers, section leaders, and government;
  - (b) allow victims to speak directly or through written submissions about their experiences; and
  - (c) inform the Government in preparation for COAG.

I rise today to discuss an issue that is at the forefront of public consciousness and the awareness of this place, and that is the issue of domestic violence. I have been reflecting on this issue for a little while now, and it is, I think, a very good thing that in this place we have had unison, 17 voices all speaking together with the same message. I am sure that there will be ongoing debates about particular messages and initiatives, particular funding measures and so on, but I think the fact that we have come to a point in this place where we had a motion moved by the government yesterday and we have a motion moved by the opposition today calling for action,

calling for increased focus on domestic violence, can only be a good thing. I certainly include the words of Mr Rattenbury as well, in support of Mr Corbell's motion yesterday. This is a tripartisan view.

I also note the very eloquent and moving speech made by Ms Lawder yesterday evening in the adjournment debate, when members of the Costigan family were present. I do not think that anyone who was here would not have been moved by those words. As I spoke to the Costigan family members yesterday, reflecting on the tragic events of the death of Tara Costigan, I did reflect that there is no doubt that those tragic events have led to increased public awareness and certainly a focus here in the Assembly on the desperate need to make sure that we are doing all that we can. There is nothing that will take away the hurt and pain from the Costigan family, but they should rest assured that her death will not be in vain, that it has served to make sure that our efforts in this place towards the very important issue of domestic violence are redoubled.

Yesterday we reflected on this issue, and we talked about the statistics. I will turn to those later on, but there is no doubt that the statistics are horrific and we need to raise awareness constantly. We have got to make sure that the efforts that we have made in the Assembly this week, the public awareness that has come about because of the tragic events that we have seen and the focus that we see through COAG in July, through the appointment of Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year, do not then fade as our attention moves to other issues. We must make sure that we redouble our efforts constantly.

I know that there are those in this Assembly that do so, and I point out Mr Gentleman, who was referenced yesterday. I know he has been very active in this area, with White Ribbon. I am very proud, personally, to be a White Ribbon ambassador. I know others are. So this is not something that is a Liberal or a Labor or a Green issue. We all own it.

I think that we can change the culture, because that is what is needed. It is about respect, it is about the way that we behave and it is about making it clear in our community that no domestic violence, no action, is acceptable, and that what is acceptable is standing up. If it is seen, if you are aware, if you see any behaviour that is reflective of domestic violence in all of its forms, then it is acceptable to say that is not a goer, it is acceptable to dob people in and it is acceptable to stand up for people who are the victims of domestic violence. There is a sort of culture in Australia about not dobbing people in and so on, and there is no place for that when it comes to domestic violence.

I have called for a roundtable, but I would like to make the point that that is not, in my view, any sort of panacea. As I said yesterday, it is not the start of a conversation; it is not the finish of a conversation; it is simply an effort to say that a number of changes have happened in our community of recent times, since the government last held a roundtable. We have seen the funding cuts that were the subject of Mr Corbell's motion yesterday, that the opposition supported, and we need to see what the impact of those is on those community organisations affected.

We need to look at some of the recent legislative changes that have occurred in other jurisdictions, at how they have impacted and may be appropriate here in the ACT, regardless of which political party instigated these changes. This has been a body of work that has been taken on by attorneys-general, chief ministers and ministers for women in all jurisdictions, Liberal and Labor, over time. We have the opportunity of the national conversation that is happening in COAG, and we want to make sure that we go into that COAG meeting with a very clear vision about what it is that we need to see locally in the ACT but also what we want to roll out nationally as well. I think that the ACT can take a leading role when it comes to some of these things.

As I said, there is the increase in public awareness. There is an opportunity, I think. We can take a stronger stand. We can put more resources into this area and it will have that community support, and we must take advantage of that. And unquestionably there has been an increase in demand. From speaking to a number of people in the community sector who are responsible for the provision of services for people who are victims of domestic violence, it is unquestionable that there has been an ever-increasing demand for services in this area. We must make sure that people who are seeking support know that they will receive support from those agencies.

The worst thing that we can do in many ways is raise awareness, tell people, "If you are a victim come forward, seek help," then find that those people that do come forward, that do seek help, are rejected or the organisations that are set up are unable to provide that sort of support because essentially we have raised expectations and dashed expectations. I think in the longer term that would be almost as bad as doing nothing whatsoever. We do need to make sure that the actions that we take in the community match our words and match the resources. That is why I have called for a roundtable.

I am aware that Mr Corbell will be moving amendments. I have not seen them circulated yet, but I believe that they are on their way. I will be supporting the amendments. As I said, the important thing that we are doing here is making sure that this issue is on the agenda, that this is a focus of our attention, and I welcome the fact that the government will now convene a meeting of the council and others, as well as inviting MLAs. Whether we call it a roundtable or call it something else, I think this is an area where we should not say that we can only talk; we must have action. But we do need to make sure that, particularly as MLAs and senior government officials, we understand exactly what needs to be done and what is being called for from the community. We do need to look at issues as to where the gaps are. Are there gaps in public housing, in emergency relief for housing? Are there gaps in legal aid? Are there gaps in police response? Are there gaps in our legislation?

We know that Tasmania is taking a leading role when it comes to domestic violence orders, to make sure that they are effective in different jurisdictions. I think that is a good idea. We know that we are an island within New South Wales. We certainly want to make sure that a domestic violence order that might be effective in Queanbeyan is equally as effective in Canberra, and vice versa, because many Canberra residents, and indeed Queanbeyan residents, essentially live cross-border or may have partners on the other side of those borders.

We also need to look at what we are doing well, and I would like to acknowledge that there is a lot of good work being done. I think that some of the initiatives put forward by the Prime Minister are most welcome, and I think those members opposite for putting partisanship aside and acknowledging where the federal government has taken some good initiatives. Equally, I recognise that there has been good work done by the ACT government in this area.

But, as I said yesterday—and I think it was acknowledged—we also need to accept that there are gaps, that there are many things that we can be doing. We do need to make sure that the resources that we do provide in this area are targeted, that they are focused where the need is greatest. I do not know where that is. I will be perfectly frank. I have had a range of conversations and I know that there is a need across a number of areas, but, with the finite resources that any government will have, be it federal or local, we need to make sure that the money that we do put forward is targeted to the greatest area of need, is balanced—we cannot have all the money going into one area and not others—and is coordinated.

We want to make sure that we are coordinating the resources so that we do not have duplication in one area with service provision whilst we are excluding another. I know that this is always a difficult issue. It is a difficult space. We will not always get it right. Sometimes mistakes will be made and we need to acknowledge that.

Madam Speaker, I know that you have been a strong advocate in this area for many years. We have had discussions about this and I know that this is something that you feel strongly about, as does Ms Lawder, and that was reflected in her speech yesterday. I know that Mrs Jones would have loved to have been here. I had discussions with her with regard to this issue. She cannot be here because she is imminently due and we await good news, hopefully in the coming few days or weeks, about that. I know that Mrs Jones has been a strong advocate for this as well, as have others in the opposition and others in this place.

As I said yesterday, Mrs Jones raised the issue of the women's referral centre in the ACT. That centre had been open for 35 years, had provided support for women, many of whom were suffering from domestic violence. It provided access to services. The closing of that I think was unfortunate. There were 700 signatures on a petition. There were certainly comments made by a range of people with regard to the impact that would have on them.

As Mr Corbell said yesterday, women and others suffering from domestic violence do not live in one particular pocket of Canberra. There is the perception that there is social disadvantage in some areas and not others. The reality is that there are people suffering from domestic violence in Tuggeranong, in Belconnen, in Gungahlin, in Woden, in Weston and in the city. And to close and to reduce access to these important services in a particular locale and then say, "You can access these services in the regions, in the town centres of Belconnen or Tuggeranong," does not work for a woman that might be in the Northbourne flats or for people who are living in the city or close to the city. It does not work if the services that they need to access are closed and they are told, particularly the many women from disadvantaged families who may not have access to a motor vehicle, "Those services will now be available to you in Tuggeranong." That does not work.

I think that is something that we need to be mindful of and make sure that it is not just about the services that are provided but where they are provided. For people often who are suffering from domestic and family violence, those services need to be accessible, and it is not simply a matter of just having a website or a phone number. Often, as was reflected in the conversations with the women that used to access the women's referral centre in the city, the ability to go somewhere and talk face to face, a place where they can meet with people, is important.

So I commend the fact that we are having this conversation here. I commend the fact that there is going to be action taken. I thank the government for the resources that they provided earlier this week. I think that is a good thing, but it is only a step along the way. As I indicated, I will wait until I see the amendments but, based on what has been circulated to my office, I welcome the amendments and indicate that they will have the opposition's support.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.17): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move the two amendments that have been circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

**MR CORBELL**: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1)(a), substitute:

- “(a) 1 in 6 Australian women have experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner;
- (aa) 1 in 4 Australian women have experienced emotional abuse from a current or former partner; and
- (ab) 1 in 3 Australian women have experienced physical violence.”.

(2) Omit all words after “calls on the ACT Government to”, substitute:

- “work with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council to convene an extraordinary meeting in April, prior to the next COAG meeting, noting:
  - (a) the extraordinary meeting will be augmented by domestic violence experts in the community;
  - (b) the meeting will include organisations that represent people who have experienced domestic and family violence; and
  - (c) Members of the Legislative Assembly will be invited to attend the meeting.”.

I welcome the motion from the Leader of the Opposition this morning and I welcome the ongoing discussion in this place on the issue of domestic violence and the

traumatic impact it has across our community. It is, I think, a matter of some regret, though, that all too often our focus and our attention on these issues is only drawn when there is a tragedy like the death of Tara Costigan, because this is an issue that is occurring every day in our community.

Every day there is violence and intimidation in a household somewhere in Canberra. More likely than not, Madam Speaker, it is violence perpetuated by men against women and children. That is not exclusively the case. There are instances where men are also the victim of domestic violence. But, overwhelmingly—and the statistics tell us this—it is violence perpetuated by men against women and children.

That being said, it is nevertheless welcome that as a community and as an Assembly we are engaged in this discussion today. Yesterday we had a very comprehensive discussion about the efforts the ACT government is undertaking to address this issue. Those approaches have included a very strong level of whole-of-government commitment to the national strategy for the prevention of violence against women and children which, of course, was instigated, developed and signed off by the previous Labor government. Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard was a leading advocate of the importance of that national strategy.

Locally we have our own strategy and policy framework to respond to the issue of preventing violence against women and children in our community. We continue to work collaboratively both nationally in the national fora, as needed, to drive implementation of the national strategy and locally with our community sector and justice sector partners to ensure that these reforms continue to be implemented.

The ACT government, through its officials, has since late 2014 been consulting on the second implementation plan of the national strategy. This involves engagement with the community sector, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the Victims of Crimes Commissioner, relevant government directorates and ACT Policing. So we will continue as a jurisdiction to be a very strong voice in national fora, including the anticipated April COAG discussion on domestic violence.

Here in Canberra our work is focused on concrete actions to combat this terrible scourge. We have strong domestic violence laws and we strongly support the development and implementation of a framework so that domestic violence orders can be recognised across state boundaries. As Attorney-General I had a discussion with my state and territory counterparts late last month where we collectively agreed that we would support every effort to provide for a nationally recognised register of domestic violence orders regardless of state boundaries.

We know that all too often women and children flee a violent situation, often moving interstate. Yet having taken out an order in one jurisdiction, it may not be recognised or known in another. A national register is one way of overcoming that problem and I am very pleased to see that across all jurisdictions there is bipartisan support for such a reform.

I would like to turn to some of the statistics. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, ANROWS as it is known, released a report in May



last year. That report showed that nearly one woman every week in Australia is killed by their current or former partner. One woman every week! One in three women in Australia has experienced physical violence. One in four has experienced emotional abuse. One in six experience physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner. One in 19 Australian women also reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from a partner or former partner.

It is important to appreciate that domestic violence is more than simply physical violence. It crosses social boundaries and the statistics mean that domestic and family violence is likely to affect someone you know, love or care about. In 2010 the New South Wales and the Australian law reform commissions jointly published a report entitled *Family violence—a national legal response*. It contained 186 recommendations. Of these, 131 were specifically relevant to states and territories.

The ACT decided that it would work with our own stakeholders locally to work out how we could respond to these recommendations. As a result, the government hosted a series of five roundtable discussions with a broad range of community and justice sector representatives, including the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Aboriginal Justice Centre, Legal Aid, the Victims of Crime Commissioner, Corrective Services, the Law Society, the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the Women’s Legal Centre, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, VOCAL, the Public Advocate of the ACT, the Office for Women and many others.

In addition to these roundtable discussions, there were a number of one-on-one conversations with agencies who had a particular interest in specific recommendations of the law reform commissions. That consultation and policy development process is ongoing. The report has over 40 recommendations relating to protection orders alone which have been discussed in detail.

The net effect of the recommendations contained in these reports is that there should be a seamless legal framework for those involved in domestic and family violence and sexual assault; that victims are able to better obtain access to legal and support services; that people who engage in domestic and family violence or sexual assault need to be held to account for their actions; and that interventions and support in circumstances of family violence need to be effective.

I mentioned earlier the development of a national DVO scheme. This has been mentioned in Mr Hanson’s motion. It is currently the subject of interjurisdictional consultation to develop a model bill. The ACT has indicated its support for the development of a model national scheme to recognise domestic violence orders across state and territory boundaries. It will improve the safety of those who are protected by such orders, and we continue to have input into the development of that model bill.

“Our responsibility—ending violence against women and children” is the ACT’s strategy for the prevention of violence against women and children. Implementation of the our responsibility strategy requires integrated governance arrangements that cut across different parts of government administration. Consultation taken as part of the development of this strategy included broad community consultation in November

last year; consultation with groups representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including the ACT Elected Body; a joint meeting with the chair of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and representatives from a range of ministerial councils; and follow-up meetings with the school sector, the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing; the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian Entrance Committee, the Victims Advisory Board and the Domestic Violence Prevention Council itself.

This has been a very important range of consultations. Some of the opportunities in areas of focus emerging from the our responsibility consultations have included the need to engage business to improve social outcomes; the use of better and relevant data to shape approaches and to inform and influence decision-makers; the intergenerational impact of violence, including the need to intervene earlier to prevent the intergenerational transfer of clients into refuges; the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse women, Indigenous women and women with disabilities; promotion of gender equality in schools; joined-up systems and services to deliver appropriate responses; a focus on the child protection system and the out of home care system; and trauma-informed practice training.

The government is pleased to join with the opposition in both supporting this motion today and moving agreed amendments to it. Effective responses to the type of violence that we see in our community require a whole-of-government approach and a widespread community engagement. I think we are certainly seeing a broad groundswell of more intense community engagement than we have seen for some time on this issue.

The amendments I am moving to Mr Hanson's motion are consistent with the government's current approach of working together with our partners in the community to ensure a proactive response to domestic and family violence that is targeted, long term and effective. Included in the amendments that I have circulated this morning is a proposal to work with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, our standing ministerial advisory body on domestic violence matters.

We are asking them to convene an extraordinary meeting in April ahead of the COAG meeting to allow for an informed discussion on actions to date, on key issues emerging and for members of the Assembly to have the opportunity to meet directly with that council and, indeed, a number of other individuals who I believe should be brought together, such as the Victims of Crime Commissioner and others, to be informed, to share views and to reach a broad understanding of the way forward on this very, very important issue.

Under the Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986, the DVPC can inquire into and provide advice to the minister on matters relating to domestic violence that have been referred to it by the minister. The additional funding I announced last week will help the DVPC in this important work. It will help them in particular with the referral I gave them last year into the deaths of approximately 72 women over the last 25 years who have been killed in the ACT as a result of domestic violence matters.

The funding that I announced last week is worth reiterating. On top of the nearly \$5.5 million that the government provides in budget funding each and every year to a range of community sector providers when it comes to responding to domestic violence, last week I approved additional allocations of \$300,000 from the confiscated assets trust fund for the purposes of addressing a range of priority projects. That includes \$100,000 for the domestic violence project coordinator to develop the ACT domestic and family violence data framework.

The development of the data framework is a priority of the family violence intervention program and the Domestic Violence Prevention Council. It will build on the development of the ABS's conceptual framework for domestic and family violence and it will help inform our knowledge and understanding of data to make sure policy is grounded in evidence. It also provides funding to the Domestic Violence Prevention Council itself of \$100,000 to expand its functions and \$100,000 for a grants process for activities or projects aligned with the ACT's prevention of violence against women and children strategy 2011-17.

There is a lot we are doing in the ACT. As I mentioned yesterday, there is a lot that we can be pleased with. Programs like the family violence intervention program have been nationally recognised as a joined-up, across government response to the issues of family violence as they emerge in our justice system. But there is still much work to be done. I hope that the discussions with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council will be a productive part of that ongoing journey as we continue as a community to tackle this very difficult and traumatic matter that is affecting far too many people in our community. I commend the motion and the amendments to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (10.32): Rather than lament the fact that we are discussing the issue of domestic and family violence twice in two days, I must say I am pleased we are discussing it again because it is worthy of such significant attention. Of course, I am also sad that we need to, and that has been very much reflected in the debate both yesterday and today.

If there is one issue on which the members in this place are united, it is this issue of violence against women. We are united in our concern and horror at the repeated stories of domestic and family violence that we witness in our society, and we are united in our concern that women continue to be subject to physical and sexual violence, with one in three women being subject to violence in their lifetime, one in six women experiencing sexual or physical violence from a current or former partner, and with almost half the women experiencing violence by an ex-partner saying children had seen or heard the violence. The estimates are that that is around 13,000 children in the ACT.

In a 2011 report prepared for the Office of Women, domestic violence was identified as including physical abuse—that is, direct assaults on the body, the use of weapons, assault of children, locking the victim out of the house or sleep and food deprivation. There is also sexual abuse—that is, any form of pressured or unwanted sex or sexual degradation, coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases and making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly and criticising or using degrading insults.

They are the two main categories we tend to think of when we talk about abuse and domestic violence, but there is also emotional abuse, which can be very powerful and have a significant impact on the victim; verbal abuse, which is equally so; social abuse, which can include isolation from family and friends and other controlling relocations; economic abuse, where the powerful partner can control all the money, forbid access to bank accounts or provide some sort of inadequate allowance; psychological abuse of making threats regarding children or abusing pets or driving dangerously; and spiritual abuse, which is about the denial or misuse of religious beliefs. These are all areas that play out as part of a power relationship. The scope of this definition challenges us to think widely about the beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour that underlie domestic violence.

One would hope that with growing education and understanding of these issues we would not need to be having this debate today. But according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there has been no decline in violence against women over the last decade. Indeed, we have perhaps seen a heightened public awareness in recent months as high profile cases have been discussed in the media. Sadly, the heightened awareness we are seeing is because two women every week have died at the hands of their partners over the first two months of this year. It is because of the horrific stories that we have seen, not in someone else's community but right here in our community in the ACT.

Domestic violence is a crime, and sexual violence against women is a crime. The people who perpetrate this violence are committing crimes and, as such, must take responsibility for those crimes. Like other crimes, though, these crimes occur in a social context. They occur against a backdrop of values and beliefs that need to be challenged—values and beliefs about men's role in society and our relationship with women. I want to quote from the 2013 survey on national community attitudes towards violence against women:

Our attitudes are often shaped by the world around us, for instance, through how we see gender roles and relationships in families and organisations, and how women and men are portrayed in the media and popular culture ... As a result, preventing violence against women is not simply a matter of changing attitudes, but will also involve challenging the social factors that shape those beliefs.

Unfortunately, it seems that attitudes in the community are not changing quickly enough. There is almost daily evidence of social factors that need challenging in regard to the roles and relationships of men and women.

In regard to community attitudes, a report put together in November last year by the *Guardian* indicated that the nation's police commissioners had reached a similar conclusion. When the *Guardian* spoke with Australia's police commissioners from right around the country they universally expressed the view that domestic violence would only stop when attitudes to women changed. One commissioner, Ken Lay from Victoria, said:

I place family violence in a wider culture where vulgar and violent attitudes to women are common.

The 2013 national community attitudes survey highlighted many interesting points about the attitudes towards women's and men's roles in society, three of which I found particularly interesting in the context of today's discussion: firstly, that 27 per cent of people thought that men made better political leaders; secondly, that nearly one in five people believe that men should take charge in relationships and be the head of the household; and finally and very importantly, that over one in four people thought that women preferred men to be in charge of the relationship. These are the kinds of underlying attitudes that indicate risk factors in a society for ongoing domestic violence. It is because community attitudes need to change and because social factors need challenging that we all have a role not just as policymakers and ministers and members of the government or members of this place as leaders of the community but also as members of the community, as men and as role models for our young people.

Challenging the culture that underlies domestic violence is something we need to be active about. It is also something many community groups are focused on—that is, our collective responsibility around speaking out. It is the foundation of the White Ribbon Day pledge and the basis of a new campaign in Ontario, Canada, called “Who will you help”, which mobilises bystanders to act in situations of sexual assault. Closer to home I am reminded of the “What to say” campaign, which was launched in the ACT and developed as part of the summer of respect, a collaboration between the Women's Centre for Health Matters and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre. The “What to say” campaign focused on what others could say to men, to women and in the workplace to challenge the attitudes held, to identify and call out sexual assault and to support women who may have experienced it.

Perhaps an indication of how far we have to go in this debate was the response to posters from this campaign being put up in ACT directorate workplaces. When some men reportedly found the images confronting and were offended, the posters were removed. I say to those who might have been confronted that those posters are nowhere near as confronting as sexual violence. I say that we need to feel uncomfortable; this is an uncomfortable issue. I say that we need to remember that one in three women in Australia will be subject to physical and sexual violence in their lifetime. We need to stop pretending it does not happen to anyone we know, that it does not happen to people we work with or people that we socialise with. These are discussions we should be having with our mates, with our colleagues and, perhaps most significantly, with our sons. We all have a responsibility to act and talk in ways that prevent sexual assault. Just because the issue is shocking does not mean we should shy away from it or pretend it does not happen.

The 2013 survey I talked about on attitudes says in its summation that the opinion of global research now is that domestic violence, while prevalent and serious, is preventable, and that the causes of violence against women can be eliminated. This is a welcome assessment against a backdrop where incidence is not diminishing and where we are faced with the serious impacts of domestic violence on an almost daily or weekly basis.

As policymakers, we need to heed the warnings that the significant drivers of domestic violence include the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women and an adherence to rigidly defined gender roles and identities, particularly what it means to be masculine or feminine.

We have spoken in some detail in the last days about the many government responses, including some of the work done by ACT Corrective Services within my portfolio. In that context I thought it was interesting to reflect today on a related initiative of the government that seeks to promote respect in sports. The play by the rules framework states that sport and recreation activities should always be safe, fair and inclusive. Play by the rules can assist sports to address issues around discrimination, harassment and other forms of inappropriate behaviour and build safe, welcome and inclusive environments. While this is obviously not directed as a targeted domestic violence program, it speaks to the need for a respectful and inclusive society that values personal safety and respect. These types of initiatives can indeed be helpful as we as a community seek to reduce violence, particularly against women.

We have also spoken in some detail in the last days about the significant work done by our non-government service providers both in seeking to tackle the issue of domestic violence and particularly in supporting women who have been affected by or are at risk of domestic violence—groups such as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Victim Support ACT, Beryl Women Inc and the Rape Crisis Centre. I welcome the unanimous support yesterday for the community legal centres, which play a very significant role. Given the deeper understanding I think we have all developed through some of the recent publicity, I hope we see some success as the attorneys-general collectively and state and territory governments make a case to the federal government to reinstate funding to those important services and commit to no further funding cuts in light of the very significant role they play in this space.

In summary, I welcome Mr Hanson's motion and the spirit in which it has been brought here today. I am pleased the amendments to the motion are able to be supported by everyone here today, as they clearly support the intent of the motion, pick up work that has already been done and give it some extra emphasis in light of the very necessary public debate we have been having. I acknowledge that the sector and the government have been engaged in a number of roundtable events on domestic violence issues and that the government is working closely with stakeholders, including the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and the Victims of Crime Commissioner, to ensure that the ACT has a strong response to domestic and family violence. I welcome the review of domestic and family violence deaths in the ACT and I hope that it provides clear direction and information that will help guide further government services on this issue.

The outcome of this motion—that there is an extraordinary meeting with stakeholders and members of the Legislative Assembly—will be a useful contribution to the policy debate on domestic violence, and it is a timely one. While there is much understanding of domestic violence and while we understand much of what needs to be done, the case for further effort is clear. Sadly, domestic violence happens every day in our community and we must continue to confront it if we are to bring this scourge to an end. I support Mr Hanson's motion and the amendment moved by

Minister Corbell, and I am pleased to do that unanimously with my colleagues in the Assembly.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (10.44): How many women will it take? To be clear, it is usually—not always, but usually—women who are the victims of domestic violence. According to Our Watch, women around the world aged 15 to 44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than cancer, car accidents, war or malaria. In Australia one woman in three has experienced physical violence and one woman in five has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. Young women aged 18 to 24 are more likely to experience sexual or physical violence than women across all other age groups. Most sexual assault and most violence against young women is likely to be perpetrated by a young man they know.

Over the years there have been a number of reviews and reports and recommendations about domestic violence, and some recommendations keep cropping up. For example, the recent Queensland special task force on domestic and family violence led by Dame Quentin Bryce handed a 368-page report to the Queensland government at the end of February. Some of its 140 recommendations include: developing more integrated service responses to better help victims and overcome current barriers to information sharing; increasing the availability and standard of perpetrator intervention programs, improving court orders and processes so that they have more specialist knowledge; sharing information; being more victim focused; developing an ongoing strategy and framework for implementing, resourcing and evaluating these initiatives; and, very importantly, changing community attitudes through education, prevention and communication initiatives targeting school students, employers, lawyers, doctors and teachers.

They are all sound proposals, but we have heard some of them before: go back to the 2009 joint report of the Australian and New South Wales law reform commissions, the 2012 New South Wales Standing Committee on Social Issues report, and the 2010 national action plan to reduce violence against women and children and the follow-up second action plan. All those reports build on three decades of reviews, reports and task forces, all of which have familiar recommendations, such as better integrated victim services, more effective victim-centred legal responses, raising community awareness and greater focus on intervention and prevention. They all recognise this is a deeply entrenched social problem which requires long-term, multi-pronged solutions. There are no quick fixes.

As reported in the *Conversation* recently, Australia is not alone. Domestic violence is a global problem, found even in countries often seen as having greater gender equality, lower levels of violence and less punitive criminal justice systems. In Sweden a 2011-12 European Union survey of women showed that more than one in four reported physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner. Both the Swedish and Norwegian governments have recognised domestic violence as a significant issue. Again, if you look at what their expert reports call for, we see similar and familiar arguments for a comprehensive approach, increased coordination of victim services, treatment and intervention, and effective investigation and prosecution. A little closer to our own legal system, the UK government's 2013 call to end violence against women and children action plan sets out the same kinds of strategies we have seen called for in Australia.

It appears everyone broadly agrees that we need to change. But why haven't we? We need a bipartisan or tripartisan plan with locked-in long-term funding and commitments and coordinated nationally. We need sustained community pressure for long-term leadership and change. As a community we should not and cannot be satisfied with short-term solutions.

What we really need is to change our culture, not just our laws. Although more effective responses for victims are absolutely essential, these do not stop the problem. We need to change deeply embedded attitudes. Education and communication programs are an important part of this, but one-off campaigns are not enough. Such campaigns are only effective when reinforced by other direct measures aimed at helping victims, treating offenders and improving services. We need comprehensive responses to tie all these things together.

If there is a positive sign of change, it is that there appears to be more bipartisan political support for greater action on domestic violence than ever seen before. Having Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year gives Australians a real chance of getting people talking and acting on this in a way we have not before. We have heard that the Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, wants to place domestic violence at the centre of the agenda for a COAG meeting coming up this year. With political leaders sitting around the COAG table that day—the Prime Minister flanked by our state, territory and local government leaders—it is a chance to finally act on this terrible national scourge. We do not want that meeting to be just more talk.

I briefly mention a new tool that became available last week. Women experiencing violence can find specialist support services across Australia in one place through a new mobile app. The Daisy app, developed by 1800RESPECT and funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, was unveiled in Melbourne by the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator Michaelia Cash, and Australian of the Year Rosie Batty. In an Australian first, the Daisy app empowers women experiencing gendered violence to access services for their own unique situation—from specialist services, to legal support and advice, through to crisis accommodation—all from the one place on their phone or tablet. The Daisy app connects women who are experiencing or have experienced sexual assault or domestic and family violence to services in their state and local areas. It provides women with an easy way to find a wide range of services, and it also lists legal services, housing and finance services and children's services. You can create your own list of favourite services for easy reference.

Some groups are more vulnerable to domestic violence than even the average woman. Domestic and family violence is the number one reason why people present to specialist homelessness services, with 55 per cent of female clients citing this as the reason for seeking assistance and a total of 25 per cent for all clients. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence, and women with disability are also over-represented in the statistics relating to domestic violence and homelessness as a result of domestic violence. Furthermore, feedback from the homelessness sector has shown that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are an emerging group in the homelessness population, particularly as a result of domestic and family violence.



I reiterate that we as a community cannot let this chance for lasting change slip. By working together via a roundtable or some other mechanism, we can canvass a broader range of views and suggestions. We can encourage respectful and inclusive attitudes and behaviours and we can give life and meaning to our promise of bipartisan support. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**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) (10.53): I rise today to speak on what we all agree is a very important issue; that is, the issue of domestic violence. I add my support to the government's strong commitment in responding to domestic and family violence.

I have a strong interest in what we can do both as a government and as an Assembly to provide greater support and community awareness to end the prevalence of domestic violence in our community. I am committed to ensuring that we as a government strengthen the safeguards for people who experience domestic abuse. There has never been a time more relevant than now to call on the commonwealth to provide certainty with funding support for organisations, as we agreed in this place yesterday.

As minister for police I can advise that ACT Policing take family violence matters very seriously and have a number of strategies in place to support those in our community who are at risk. The ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy and the second implementation plan include a pilot 24/7 intimate partner violence prevention contact service. ACT Policing shares responsibility for this project with the Canberra Men's Centre and, in support, the Chief Police Officer has agreed to share funding of the pilot equally.

ACT Policing is also a partner agency on the family violence intervention program and is represented on both the coordination committee and the Domestic Violence Prevention Council. Additionally, the victims of crime team have a close working relationship with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and weekly reviews of family violence incidents are undertaken by the team leader and coordinator of DVCS.

In September 2013 ACT Policing's victims of crime team commenced the family violence perpetrator program. This program came about upon identifying the need to provide support not only for the victims of family violence but also for the perpetrators, to ensure that we stop the cycle of family violence. Indeed, as family and domestic violence campaigner and Australian of the Year Rosie Batty said:

Let's just turn the topic around and talk about the perpetrator. Why do men feel that they are able to behave in a way like this?

Entry to the program by perpetrators is voluntary and requires an absolute willingness to seek help. We recognise the need to continually look at ways to engage not only with victims of crime but also with perpetrators and to strengthen our prevention programs.

Sadly, women with disability experience domestic violence in situations similar to all women; that is, they are assaulted by someone who is known to them and it often occurs in private, in their place of residence or in the home of a friend. And women with disability or women who have children with disability face compounding barriers to escaping domestic violence. Women with disability may be in situations where other people exercise control and power over their lives.

Last year the government supported the establishment of a crisis services scheme for women with disability. This scheme has funding through the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and was established through a partnership by the ACT Disability and Community Services Commissioner, Women with Disabilities ACT, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Victims of Crime Commissioner. This scheme ensures that women with disability or women with children with disability escaping domestic violence and sexual assault can access temporary, safe accommodation with daily personal care or support services.

The ACT has exceptional advocates for people with disability experiencing domestic violence. This year's Canberra Citizen of the Year, Sue Salthouse, works tirelessly to bring about positive change for people with disability and to raise awareness about violence experienced by women with disabilities. Her work was acknowledged in the ACT plan to eliminate violence against women and their children and the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children.

We as an Assembly and as a community must come together to say enough is enough. This is not an issue that affects someone else; it is in our community, in our neighbourhoods and streets and in the homes of our friends, families and work colleagues. Again I quote Rosie Batty:

The myths of family violence are that it happens in poor neighbourhoods with people who are not as well educated or have drug and alcohol issues or mental health issues, it happens to other people, it doesn't happen here and they certainly never expect a tragic death to happen in their neighbourhood ... it always happens somewhere else. But where does it happen?

Sadly, it happens in our community. It happens in our neighbourhood. And we, as one, should say enough is enough. I hope that we in this place can work together and simply put an end to violence that has no place in our community.

**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) (10.59): It is not a happy occasion to be here talking about domestic violence, but, as Mr Rattenbury has said, it is a good thing that we are all talking about this issue in a very public way. It is clearly something that our community is also very concerned about and wants to do more about.

I want to start by providing some information to the chamber about the women's information service. As part of a new service model women can now access a continuum of care model through the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, which is

trialling three different groups at the child and family centres in Tuggeranong, west Belconnen and Gungahlin for women with children who have experienced domestic violence.

The reason why this service has been taken out across our community is that it is not only women in the city and surrounding suburbs that experience domestic violence. The women's information officers are rotating through each of the three child and family centres at Tuggeranong, west Belconnen and Gungahlin. I believe that this new service has created more accessible and responsive services than the previous centrally located shopfront. This also works in with what the ACT government is building with the human services blueprint, which will make Canberra's human services system more integrated and cohesive.

I welcome the Attorney-General's recognition that we need to think about the law and whether we need to change it. We need to remember that domestic violence is a crime and, as such, our legal system, our judges, our lawyers and our courts need to support and instigate appropriate sanctions, as with any other crime. But this is not a problem that can be solved with legal responses on their own. It is a heartbreaking reality that the fear of prosecution has not prevented even the most awful intimate partner violence, and that no amount of protection can give back to a woman experiencing violence the freedom that the perpetrator takes from her.

We need a response that starts with the individual and addresses violence in the way they want it addressed. For many women, the thought of criminal prosecution of their partner is a deterrent to reporting behaviour before it escalates. For some, the shame of public court proceedings or financial difficulty makes them stay away. We need to meet women experiencing violence where they are. And regardless of what they want to see happen to their partner, we need to help them leave violence on their own terms.

In the long term we need to make sure no woman ever has to make the hard choices faced by those who experience domestic violence. To achieve this we need a whole-of-community response that continues to send the message that we have seen in recent days—that our community will not tolerate domestic violence and sexual abuse.

I think a meeting for all members of this place with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council is a good beginning to involving all members in the work of ending violence. The Domestic Violence Prevention Council brings together 12 member representatives from many groups in our community. It includes representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the culturally and linguistically diverse community, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and women with disability. They sit on the council with representatives of Policing and ACT government, including Health, Chief Minister and cabinet, Justice and Community Safety and the Community Services directorates.

Listening to this diversity of voices and their expertise will help members of this place to understand the complexity of addressing domestic violence, and listening to the experience of women who have experienced violence will help them understand their needs.

Domestic violence and sexual abuse are the responsibility of all of us. As a community we need to address this together. As an employer in the ACT, the government provides 20 days leave for those who are experiencing domestic violence. Nationally, the ACTU, the peak union body, has made a claim before the Fair Work Commission to have this provision applied to all employees across our country.

I hope that employers across the country can join with the community and governments in supporting this call to end domestic violence and sexual abuse and can support the ACTU and their claim, which will contribute to the work that all of us must do together to end domestic violence and sexual abuse.

On Friday I joined with the Women's Centre for Health Matters, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Women's Legal Centre to launch the web page "What Can You Do?" Mr Rattenbury talked about it yesterday. The page is designed to give information so that you can identify and speak about domestic violence and sexual abuse and know what you could do to intervene safely and confidentially. I encourage members to get involved in that campaign on social media, by visiting the website and, on Twitter, by using the hashtag "#end the 1 in 3" or "#what can you do?"

I am pleased that all members of this place have shown a commitment to better understanding this issue, because if it was a simple issue we would have solved it by now. As a government we will continue with our renewed framework to work with the sector, with women who have experienced violence and with all stakeholders to consider how best we use the available resources to tackle the complexity of this problem. We will continue to build on our knowledge and we will refine our response until, as Marcia Williams so simply put it, we commit ourselves to getting it right. I commend the amended motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.05): I welcome the opposition leader bringing forward this motion today so that we can continue the conversation that was commenced yesterday by the Attorney-General and other members on this vital issue.

There is no doubt that all in this chamber understand and agree with the intent behind this motion—to ensure that we all meet our responsibilities as representatives of our community to show that we no longer tolerate family violence in our midst. I certainly support the Attorney-General's amendments that he has circulated, because we must act now to reduce the incidence of domestic and family violence. We must find ways to best protect and support the victims of such violence and most effectively deal with offenders and, indeed, the causes of their offending.

The opposition leader this morning, and other speakers yesterday, laid out a range of statistics that convey the pervasiveness of this form of violence in Australia. Over 100,000 women experienced violence from a current or former partner over the past year. Over 100 lives are lost in our country each year through domestic violence, and it causes long-term, perhaps lifelong, effects for many more. Since the age of 15, almost one in five women has experienced some form of sexual violence, one in three has experienced some form of physical violence and one in four has experienced emotional abuse in their lifetime.

As I said yesterday, and I reiterate it this morning: these figures are unacceptable in modern Australia. We simply can no longer tolerate them.

Every single facet of our society is affected by this scourge of violence. Given recent events, no-one can pretend that Canberra's many socioeconomic and educational advantages make us immune. Domestic and family violence does not discriminate. It does not define itself by class, age, race or sexuality. It occurs in Australia's richest suburbs and in our poorest, and in our most remote towns.

Given that it affects every single part of our community and detracts from us all, I have made it very clear that the task of combating this abhorrent violence is simply not the job of one minister in government. Each member of this executive, and indeed this government and this place, has a role in tackling family violence at its source, supporting and protecting those who experience violence against them, to address the causes of violence, and effectively deal with perpetrators.

Ministers have been working closely with service providers, experts and, importantly, those who have personally experienced violence to discuss what is working and what more needs to be done. The Attorney-General's recent announcements regarding a targeted funding boost of \$300,000 and reform of the victims of crime financial assistance scheme are two very practical steps that the government is taking right now to provide support to victims as well as those working every day on the front line.

I would also like to commend the recently launched campaign encouraging everyone to take responsibility and take action if they are aware of domestic violence occurring. The "What Can You Do?" campaign provides clear information on what steps you can take to support those experiencing violence and how to speak out. Community-led responses are equally necessary to demonstrate that we will no longer stand by in wilful ignorance.

Of particular note in this motion is the role that the Council of Australian Governments can play in raising awareness, providing support for those working at the coalface, implementing better protection systems and, importantly, seeking to reduce recidivism.

This is a national problem, and it is also one that demands both a local and an overarching national response. That is why, as I indicated yesterday, the ACT government is part of a \$30 million national awareness campaign that we are co-funding, together with the commonwealth, the states and the Northern Territory.

As we discussed yesterday, raising awareness about the services available for victims will only be effective, of course, if those same services are properly and sustainably funded in the future. Without wanting to harp on this point—but it does need to be made—the commonwealth's cuts to the Women's Legal Centre and the domestic violence crisis translation interpreter services are counterproductive. I think this has been realised, though, at a national level. The critical service that these particular centres are providing to women trying to escape domestic violence is being recognised.

Beyond arguing for the federal government to restore support service funding to previous levels, if not increased levels, the ACT will advocate for a framework so that domestic violence orders can operate nationally. The territory government strongly supports improving collaboration and information sharing between court processes and developing a national domestic violence order scheme to ensure better protection for women who move interstate—and many are compelled to do so in order to get away from a perpetrator or a situation.

The government will also advocate for, and do its part to develop and implement, national outcome standards for perpetrator interventions. These standards will provide a consistent set of standards applicable across all jurisdictions and focus on improving the outcomes of perpetrator interventions. The purpose of such interventions is to directly improve the safety of women and children by stopping a perpetrator's violent behaviour.

Consistent outcome standards will send a strong signal that violence against women will not be tolerated anywhere in Australia and that perpetrators will be held to account. When COAG meets to discuss these and other measures, I will be urging my first minister colleagues that we can and must do more.

Here in the ACT we are doing more than just talking, although I acknowledge that raising this issue and having it debated in the Assembly two days in a row is important. Every member of this government and every member of this Assembly is acting to reduce this scourge on our community. I commend the amendments and indeed the Leader of the Opposition for raising this issue today, and thank the Assembly for its mature consideration of this very important issue.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Molonglo) (11.13): I also rise today to thank the Leader of the Opposition for this motion, and the Attorney-General for his amendments.

It is indeed sad to stand here this week and discuss this issue of family and domestic violence. When I was first elected to the Assembly on 16 January and spoke to a number of media outlets on the day, they asked me what issues I was interested in, and I said that family violence was one that I had a longstanding interest in. I did not foresee the experiences that members of our own community have gone through, with the tragic death of at least one woman, possibly two, in our own community just in the last couple of weeks. I hoped in a strange way that Rosie Batty would be successful, and nominated as the Australian of the year, and she was. As Mr Rattenbury said, it is not an issue that we would want to be standing here talking about, but, as we are, I am so pleased that this chamber has come together in the way it has over the last couple of days.

Since I have been here, for the last two months, I have had a lot of questions asked of me about what it is like in the chamber. I know that friends of mine and people in the community reading the newspaper might often think that there is not much agreement between all sides of politics in the chamber. I am so very pleased, and I so very much hope it is reported, that this is one issue that has captured the hearts and the minds of everyone in this chamber, and I hope that it leads to action.

I know that there have been recent announcements federally around a COAG meeting; the appointment of Rosie Batty to a council leading discussions on how we actually combat domestic violence; announcements by the Attorney-General on increased funding; and events and activities in our community which are garnering support not just from organisations that already know so much about this terrible issue, as Minister Berry said yesterday, but from people across our community.

It has really affected us. One of the things that Canberra does so well is bring people together. As sad as it is, I do hope that we see the policy development continue; the legislative frameworks debated in this place and supported; and funding provided to those organisations that need it.

The private sector is talking about this issue. As many members have noted, this is not an issue defined by poverty, class, race or location; it is everywhere. The victims, the offenders and the perpetrators work in the public sector and in the private sector. We all have a role to play. Our community has a role to play. As community representatives, we are doing our job today, as we will when we leave this place to talk to our community about the scourge that is family and domestic violence—how it affects women, men, and particularly the children, who not only most often lose their mother but will likely lose their father as well.

So I stand to support both the motion and the amendment. I look forward to the Assembly continuing to work together on this important issue.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.17): Thank you very much, members, for your contributions, all of which have been valuable and added to the debate. As I said, I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendments, which I think are good; they go to the heart of the motion.

As I think we all agree, there is no panacea. This is not the start of the conversation or the end of it, but it is an important conversation to have. I welcome the fact that we will now have an important meeting, getting everybody together and inviting MLAs to talk about this issue, at some stage in April. That is good, and it is reflective of the bipartisan approach that is being taken to this issue.

I commend the Attorney-General on a number of initiatives that he has taken in recent times, including funding, changes to victim support, the work that he is doing on making sure that DVOs can cross borders, and the other work that he is going to be doing in this area. And I thank those in government services and community services, many of whom are represented by ministers here, that are doing work in this area, often on the front line, be it the police, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, representatives of all the members who are on the preventative council or all those others who really are at the forefront.

Mr Rattenbury, thank you for your comments. It is true that sometimes we are quick in this place to apportion credit and to apportion blame. In this instance, there may be credit and there may be blame to be apportioned, both locally and federally. It is good that this has not been the focus of this debate. Credit is due in some areas; regardless

of whether it is for Liberal or Labor, let us make sure that we put it where it is due. And if there is work to be done and mistakes being made, let us identify those and make sure that it is not about trying to apportion blame but about trying to identify where more work needs to be done. I think that we have done that in this place today, and I look forward to that continuing.

Ms Lawder, thank you for your contribution. I reiterate the words that you said last night, which were very moving and very important. As someone who has come to this place from the community sector, particularly having been involved with the disability sector and with housing, you have a great understanding of the frontline impact of domestic violence. And the point you made about cultural change is entirely relevant.

Ms Burch, I know, has been working in this area in other roles but is now working as minister for police. There is no doubt that the police in our city are at the forefront. They are often charged with intervening in very difficult circumstances. I know that it is a priority for the police, and we want to make sure that that continues. I thank Ms Burch for her comments and the point she made about this being an issue for perpetrators. Ultimately, that is where the change must occur. The conversation is about victims and the support that we can provide, but the change will come from the perpetrators.

Although Mr Gentleman has not spoken specifically to this motion, I know that the subject has been something that he has continually talked about. He and I have made that White Ribbon pledge: “I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. This is my oath.” That is something that is entirely relevant to this debate.

Ms Berry has highlighted the complexities for women who face domestic violence. It is very difficult when someone that you are married to, someone you love, someone that might be the father of your children is the person that is inflicting the domestic violence. It is an incredibly difficult and complex issue for those confronted by domestic violence. Recognising that is a very important point—and recognising that prevention must be a whole-of-community response, particularly focused on those who are disadvantaged, be it through being Indigenous, being a refugee, having English as second language or being disabled.

I thank Mr Barr for his contribution. He is right to recognise that this requires a whole-of-government and a whole-of-community response. This is not simply the responsibility of a single minister, a single individual; this is a shared responsibility in the community. Given that we collectively represent the vast majority of the people in the community that wanted us in this place to take a strong stance on issues like this, it is important that we have combined to do that.

Ms Fitzharris, I am glad that you have finally seen a debate in this place, that you can see we can transcend the political battle. The political battles that we have are important. We cannot shy away from that; there is a contest of ideas that must continue. But there is no doubt that in many ways we are at our best when we can put those battles aside and focus solely on what is best for the community—in this case, those who are suffering from domestic violence.



Madam Deputy Speaker, we in this place have been spurred on collectively by the public events that have occurred, the tragic and horrific events that we have seen nationally and locally. But let us not forget that the bulk of domestic violence occurs behind closed doors and is invisible to the community. It is only our sustained action, the cultural change that must come from leaders in our community that will effect a change in relation to domestic violence. It is not just the horrific events that we have seen; it is those other events, the other domestic violence that is occurring behind closed doors.

I thank members for their contributions. I thank the Attorney-General for his amendments. I look forward to the meeting that will occur, where I hope that another step can be taken in our community's battle against domestic violence.

Amendments agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Planning—Oaks Estate**

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (11.24): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Oaks Estate is a 40 hectare village on the ACT border near Queanbeyan. First settled in 1836, the village has been part of the ACT since 1911;
- (b) that a draft Policy Plan for Oaks Estate was developed by the former NCDC in 1983; in 1994 a Territory Planning Study was undertaken; in 2001 an Oaks Estate Planning Study was commissioned and in 2012 the ACT Government started community engagement on a master plan to identify issues of concern to local residents;
- (c) that in addition, two heritage assessments were conducted in 2002 and 2013, both of which recommended the Village be heritage listed as a "place of historic and social significance in the ACT";
- (d) that despite all these attempts at community engagement and government interest, Oaks Estate was described in the 2006 census as one of two most disadvantaged suburbs in Canberra;
- (e) that despite pleas and submissions to various Ministers in the current and previous ACT Government, the area remains seriously neglected with rising levels of crime, increasing social disadvantage due to changing demographics and increasing isolation due to no public transport, no safe pathways and no support services; and

- (f) the residents' request to halt the Master planning process to allow the Heritage Council to finalise the nomination and heritage guidelines for Oaks Estate; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) address the residents' immediate concerns, particularly in respect of public housing;
  - (b) work more closely with the Oaks Estate Progress Association to address their concerns about increased rates of crime including providing a more visible police presence;
  - (c) deliver amenity improvements such as safe footpaths, safer intersections, better street lighting and hazard reduction;
  - (d) consider providing an ACTION bus route schedule to ensure, at a minimum, an efficient and affordable direct route for school children to schools and commuters to work; and
  - (e) acknowledge concerns raised during the community engagement process and protect the vital heritage nature of this unique Canberra village to improve the quality of life for these Canberra families.

I have much pleasure in moving this motion today, not only because Oaks Estate is part of the electorate of Molonglo, which I represent, but also because it is an opportunity to shine a light on the systemic neglect that has been delivered to the residents of this area for decades. It is time to highlight the actions, or rather the inactions, of this government in this regard.

Frankly, it is an indictment of all of us who live in Canberra that we have a community that has, to all intents and purposes, been forgotten, with the residents left to manage and put up with whatever this government sends their way. Oaks Estate is a study in what can happen when communities get forgotten by successive bureaucracies. When you have a minister's office in the ACT believing that Oaks Estate is part of Queanbeyan, as one Oaks Estate resident read in a letter, you have probably reached a sad level of irrelevance. Oaks Estate is a 40-hectare village on the border between the ACT and Queanbeyan and has been part of the ACT since 1911, although many people believe it is part of Queanbeyan as it lies adjacent to the city of Queanbeyan, with the Molonglo River bordering it to the north and the Queanbeyan River on its southern border.

Oaks Estate has a delightful history. It takes its name from "the Oaks", which formed part of Robert Campbell's original farm, Duntroon. That makes it one of the very few areas in the Canberra region that can trace its name and roots back to the early days of settlement of this district. Of course, that means its settlement predates the establishment of Canberra. That alone delivers a special historical significance, given that so much of Canberra is barely 100 years old.

The area has about 90 lots. While the land is mostly residential, there are some small-scale commercial, light industrial, community use and small rural areas. The most recent master plan describes the character of the dwellings as mixed. It says:

While the majority of the residential land area is low density detached housing, more than half of the dwellings are clusters of three and four storey flats from the 1970s. There are 78 public housing dwellings managed by the ACT Government and not-for-profit organisations such as St Vincent de Paul Society.

While there is a current master plan process, it is by no means the first. A draft policy plan for Oaks Estate was developed by the former National Capital Development Authority in 1983, 32 years ago. That was followed by a territory planning study undertaken in 1994. In 2001 another planning study was commissioned, and in 2012 the ACT government started community engagement on the current master plan. Earlier this week the consultation period for this current plan closed.

In addition, the area has been the subject of two heritage assessments, the first in 2002 and the second in 2013, both of which recommended that the village be heritage listed as a place of historical and social significance in the ACT.

On face value, given its small size and with a residential base of around 240 to 260 citizens, depending on whose data you choose to believe, one could be excused for thinking that here is an area that has had significant attention from government and that it must be a favoured region. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, so neglected and forgotten has Oaks Estate been that in the 2006 census Oaks Estate was described as one of the two most disadvantaged suburbs in Canberra. That is a big call, but it has every right to be described as that. Interestingly, Mr Gentleman, in his proposed amendment, which he only circulated a short time ago, tries to even deny this factual statistical statement; he wants to expunge that or take out any reference to how bad is the situation that Oaks Estate is in—and has been in for quite a while.

A recent article by Mark Sawa in the *Canberra Times* is a telling story and an indictment of an area that has so much to be proud of and so much that should be treasured but that has been allowed to flounder and manage as best it can. The article highlighted some of the everyday challenges those who choose to live in the area face. The article outlined the frequency of domestic violence and drug issues; the almost routine process of residents needing to call the police in the middle of the night; and the recent abuse of the district's heritage-listed Robertson House, which is reportedly being used as a shooting gallery by junkies.

The residents at Oaks Estate are used to this. As the article suggested, they rarely complain and are proud of where they live. They have a grudging acceptance that they are rarely paid much attention by the ACT government or its bureaucrats. But the situation has become increasingly worse. Despite fearing being regarded as NIMBYs, they feel they need to speak out and speak up about what their suburb is turning into and what it is becoming.

The key issues for Oaks Estate residents are as outlined in this motion: the rising levels of crime; the increasing social disadvantage due to changing demographics; and the increasing isolation for public housing residents, who have no means of transport but are being directed to live in an area without affordable and accessible public transport. The issues affecting Oaks Estate are not new. They have been identified in successive planning studies, and each time recommendations are agreed, they appear to get conveniently shelved until the next round of consultation or community engagement and planning.

Take public housing, admittedly always a subject with the potential to give rise to passionate and heated debate. The issue of the amount of public housing in Oaks Estate has been contentious for some years. The common cry in defence of public housing is that it has to go somewhere. For Oaks Estate residents, their justifiable response could be: “But why does there have to be such a high percentage in our village?”

As I said, this is not a new subject for Oaks Estate, and it is one that residents raise cautiously. The 2001 planning study listed 12 recommendations for the suburb. The first was to reduce the amount of public housing to match the Canberra average. That was 14 years ago. The situation has not changed. Some could say it has just continuously worsened.

Whether you believe the ABS and Allhomes statistics that suggest that around 28 to 30 per cent of residential housing is public or whether you believe residents’ locally based research that suggests something much higher, the reality is that it is two to three times higher than the ACT average. That brings with it a range of issues. It is usual practice for public housing to be placed in areas that are close to community centres, shops and transport. None of that is easily accessible from Oaks Estate. And when a higher than average percentage of the community fits into a category requiring access to public health and community services, that accelerates the social isolation and disadvantage that some residents feel. Just on the note of shopping centres, when I visited Oaks Estate I saw one shop, and that was predominantly a bottle shop.

This is an area that is geographically isolated from major centres in Canberra where support is given. If there is just one example, and there are many to choose from, to demonstrate the years of consistent and persistent neglect by this government of Canberra families living in Oaks Estate, it is the ongoing saga of buses. Many people in Canberra are critical of the ACTION bus service. There are complaints about frequency and reliability and, more recently, numerous complaints about changed bus routes. For the people of Oaks Estate, their complaint about the bus service is far simpler: there just is not one. Mr Rattenbury, you have to take a lot of credit for this—or blame, as the case may be. You wrote to the—

**Mr Gentleman:** Madam Deputy Speaker—

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** On a point of order. Would you sit down, please, Mr Dospot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Would you mind stopping the clock.

**Mr Gentleman:** Could Mr Doszpot address his comments through the chair, not directly to the member.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, thank you. Mr Doszpot, will you address your comments through the chair.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker. It must be hard to take personal statements like that, but that is the fact. Mr Rattenbury wrote to the previous minister in charge of ACTION when he was a member of the crossbench. There he saw fit to make statements on behalf of the community. Since he has become the minister in charge of ACTION buses, his passion for the situation seems to have changed quite dramatically.

Like all the issues raised in today's motion, the lack of bus services is not new. And it is not for lack of trying on the part of residents. They have gone as far as outlining to successive ministers how current bus routes could be extended, the amount of patronage required for a bus and when the services could run—all to no avail. What has been offered to residents is an expensive option operating out of Queanbeyan, the Qcity services. But as residents have pointed out, these services are not viable, for a number of reasons. The nearest bus stop for Oaks Estate residents is near the intersection of Crawford and Uriarra. This is 1.1 kilometres away. The express 833 route to Civic can only be caught from Queanbeyan central, which is 1.6 kilometres from Oaks Estate. Qcity buses cannot carry bicycles like ACTION buses can. The bicycle issue is very important, given that Oaks Estate residents must cover either 1.1 kilometres or 1.6 kilometres to catch a Qcity bus. And if residents wish to catch an ACTION bus from Fyshwick, they must cycle five kilometres first.

Is the current minister aware of this? Indeed he is. As I mentioned before, as a local Molonglo MLA, Mr Rattenbury wrote to then Chief Minister Katy Gallagher in May 2012, three years ago, complaining about such lack of services. In that letter he advised that he had previously written to the former TAMS minister, talking of people who are “vulnerable and socially isolated”. He mentioned the commuters and children attending ACT schools. Mr Corbell, another Molonglo MLA, effectively did nothing other than suggesting that the cost of extending the Fyshwick service to Oaks Estate during off-peak periods would be “prohibitive”. We can have light rail, but having Fyshwick bus services looking after Oaks Estate is prohibitive.

In his letter to the then Chief Minister, Mr Rattenbury sought advice as to whether an extension of services during peak hour could be considered, arguing that it would not affect the existing 15-minute service and would not result in significant dead running costs as the travel time from Fyshwick DFO to Oaks Estate is only three to six minutes. The Chief Minister replied, suggesting that a forthcoming transport review of bus routes by TAMS would look at a possible extension from Fyshwick. As we now know, nothing has happened.

After the 2012 election, Mr Rattenbury became minister for TAMS and buses, so the residents wrote again, in 2013, to Mr Rattenbury. Again the promise of the upcoming review and the opportunity for public comment were given, and again Deane's was offered as an alternative.

So there have been four years of hard lobbying of this government, and the same recycled promises, with absolutely no progress. You can understand the frustration and the situation that the Oaks Estate people find themselves in.

Surely Minister Rattenbury should be aware that if ever there was a time that he should do something to support a Canberra Liberals motion, this has got to be that issue. This would demonstrate Mr Rattenbury's genuine commitment to the voters in the electorate of Molonglo, not just to his selective moralising on issues that stray far from the regular and constant needs of his community.

It is not that there has not been sufficient examination of what could work in Oaks Estate and what needs to be done. All the ideas are out there, from the smaller ones about better street lights, footpaths and increased police presence to the harder and bigger ones about rejuvenation in housing density and mix.

As the president of the residents association, Michael Starling, said to me only yesterday, what Oaks Estate needs is rebranding. He is right. Enough negativity: it needs a brand-changing project, and Mr Starling has one. He has previously lobbied the Megalo board to move Megalo to Oaks Estate. He argues it would be a great fit—close to the airport, with factories to adapt or repurpose on adjacent land. If not Megalo, what about other organisations needing more space and a new start?

What are the other positives for Oaks Estate? For a start, there is opportunity for affordable houses on big blocks in a rural setting close to Queanbeyan and Canberra, an opportunity for families who appreciate a sense of history and a village feel not readily available elsewhere in Canberra.

Residents value their unique heritage status. I trust that the Minister for Planning, with whom residents met earlier this week, will accede to their request to delay the master planning process until such time as the heritage nomination has been finalised, which I understand should be the correct process in any event. I trust that the government also appreciates the residents' very real concerns about the co-location of light industrial in a residential area. There is potential for industrial land to be redeveloped into housing, and there are commercial owners willing to sell, so use this opportunity to make a new start for this area.

Ministers, listen to the residents. They are not opposed to change; they seek it. But it must be in keeping with all that is good and unique about the area. Commit to such things as a precinct code and better managed public housing. Recognise the limitation of Oaks Estate and do not try to run community programs better suited to areas with public transport, shops and support services. Oaks Estate cannot continue to be neglected.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Your time has expired, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Enough of the endless consultations and planning processes.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Doszpot, resume your seat.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The clock was not stopped, Madam Deputy Speaker, while I was talking. I have got five seconds. Face up to the obligations that good government demands.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Sit down, Mr Doszpot. Sit down.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Sit down.

**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) (11.40): I thank Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion here today. It is important, of course, that the Assembly is aware of community interests and, as I said, it is great that Mr Doszpot could bring the motion here today. He did mention the amendment that I have circulated, and I have circulated that because the government cannot agree with some of the inconsistencies in Mr Doszpot's original motion. However, having said that, my amendment does call for the government to take action in relation to Oaks Estate and I can advise that the Chief Minister and I will be meeting with the Oaks Estate Progress Association again as soon as timing can be arranged.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Gentleman, are you moving the amendment?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes, I will move the amendment. I move:

Omit all words after paragraph (1)(c), substitute:

- “(d) the need to work with local residents on a range of concerns, and that the ACT Government is working towards the advancement and renewal of Oaks Estate;
- (e) that the ACT Government has recently published the Oaks Estate Master Plan which will guide the growth of Oaks Estate and promote better traffic movement, increased pedestrian and cycle connectivity, increased recreation and environmental opportunities and improvements to the public domain;
- (f) that the Heritage Council is currently undertaking investigations into the heritage value of Oaks Estate and that the implementation of the Oaks Estate Master Plan will not impede on this process;
- (g) that the ACT Government provides community based support in Oaks Estate through St Vincent de Paul;

- (h) that ACTION and Qcity buses have a fare-sharing arrangement whereby Oaks Estate residents can catch a Qcity bus and pay ACTION fares and transfer to other ACTION services for free; and
  - (i) the ACT Government is committed to supporting crime and safety management in Oaks Estate and ACT policing directs additional resources aimed at detecting, disrupting and preventing anti-social and criminal behaviour; and
- (2) calls on the Government to continue to work with residents, including the Oaks Estate Progress Association on the implementation of the Oaks Estate Master Plan and continue to work with the community to address issues of social disadvantage.”.

In 2012 the ACT government commenced the Oaks Estate master plan in response to concerns raised by the community about the nature of development that has occurred there over time. As Minister for Planning I was delighted to announce the release of the Oaks Estate master plan in December last year and then, subsequent to that, the release of the draft variation to the territory plan, DV328, for community comment in January this year. It is the ACT government’s vision to retain the function and identity of regional villages and towns as distinct places throughout the ACT. The ACT planning strategy recommends that master plans set out guidelines to retain the character of these villages while allowing for limited growth and I am confident that this master plan does that.

The master plan aims to improve traffic movement and the public domain and harmonise land uses to maintain what is valued by the community in the area. The historic residential area is protected with the introduction of site coverage to ensure the village’s landscape and semi-rural character are maintained. Building setbacks and fence heights are also introduced to build on the existing mix within the village. The master plan recommends developing a sense of entry and arrival into Oaks Estate to provide a sense of identity and to help improve traffic safety at intersections along Railway Street, at McEwan Avenue and Oaks Estate Road.

The master plan also aims to promote healthy living for the community by recommending improved connectivity for walking and cycling in and around the village. The Molonglo and Queanbeyan rivers are important assets to Oaks Estate and to the Oaks Estate community. The master plan acknowledges this and proposes a new historic walk that connects back to the village core to further enhance the recreational value of the river corridor.

While preserving and protecting what is dearly valued in Oaks Estate by local residents, the master plan also allows for some opportunity for the village to develop and moderately grow into the future. The master plan proposes to concentrate new development in the village core that provides housing choice, adaptable working and living space opportunities and accommodation for small-scale business and craft workshops. Providing new development opportunities for this area will allow the village core to become a more livable and sustainable hub for the community.



The master plan encourages a diversity of building types that are complementary to the existing fine grain character clearly evident in Oaks Estate. The master plan aims to promote development that contributes to the existing setting and character of the village. It aims for quality development that encourages sustainable practice with a mix of living and working options, active streets and pedestrian activity and increased amenity for residents and visitors.

Oaks Estate is a place of significant heritage importance, as we have heard, and numerous heritage nominations have existed in the area, many of which have been unresolved for more than 10 years. In September last year the ACT Heritage Council provisionally registered two of the existing heritage nominations, the Oaks and Robertson House, with the support of the then President of the Oaks Estate Progress Association, Ms Karen Williams. And I am pleased to add that on 12 February this year the ACT Heritage Council further considered the nomination and fully registered the Oaks and Robertson House to the ACT heritage register.

The Oaks Estate precinct is also nominated to the ACT heritage register, and the ACT Heritage Council has not yet finalised its consideration on whether the precinct reaches the threshold to warrant listing. However, the nomination by the ACT Heritage Council is a priority and it is working towards making a decision on the provisional registration in the near future. The ACT Heritage Council's considerations of potential values will, in part, be informed by studies undertaken in relation to the Oaks Estate master plan.

The master plan's strategies and policies have been incorporated into a draft precinct code for Oaks Estate. The draft precinct code included as part of draft variation to the territory plan 328 has been prepared and was released for public notification for six weeks from 30 January to 16 March this year. We invited the community to have their say and to provide comments. DV328 proposes to rezone a block containing the Oaks Estate community hall from urban open space zone to community facility zone to better reflect the existing use of the land. It should be noted that this rezoning does not reflect any future intention to redevelop the site but has been undertaken to identify that the site is important as a community facility and should be retained as such.

DV328 also aims to protect the existing character of Oaks Estate by making amendments to the precinct map and code to limit the location of light industrial areas, limit building site coverage, introduce setbacks to protect the heritage character of Robertson House, and nominate active frontages and front boundary setbacks in the commercial area to provide an interesting ground floor frontage that encourages pedestrian activity and passive surveillance of the street regardless of whether the development is residential or commercial. DV328 also retains the current two-storey height limit with a new allowance permitting up to three storeys for development addressing Railway Street and/or McEwan Avenue. It also permits low, transparent residential front fencing consistent with the existing character of the area.

Now that the consultation period has closed, the Environment and Planning Directorate will review DV328 in light of the submissions received. It will also make any amendments considered necessary and refer the draft variation to me for consideration, along with a report on the outcomes of the consultation process.

The Environment and Planning Directorate has engaged extensively with the community and key stakeholders as part of the development of the Oaks Estate master plan. The key stakeholders include the Oaks Estate Progress Association, Queanbeyan City Council, Country Rail Contracts—that is, Transport New South Wales—the New South Wales Department of Planning and the ACT Heritage Council. Three rounds of community engagement have been undertaken to gather community and stakeholder concerns and priorities. Each stage informed the development of the draft and final master plans and is documented in two community engagement reports.

More than 250 people took part in these engagement activities and provided comment. These included completing surveys and feedback forms, attending public workshops, information displays and meet the planners sessions and presentations to stakeholders, and individual meetings and conversations. This important interaction helped identify what is important about Oaks Estate and how its character and quality should be conserved and enhanced.

I consider the engagement on the Oaks Estate master plan to be a positive exercise in facilitating valuable public input and feedback for the development of this master plan. It has considered complex and often conflicting issues together with technical background studies and the ACT's strategic planning context.

The then President of the Oaks Estate Progress Association, Ms Karen Williams, publicly congratulated the government on the success of the master plan. Following the release of the plan, Ms Williams is quoted as saying:

Considering the long process that we've had, which had taken more than 20 years over time with different stops and starts, I think the planners should be congratulated.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as you have heard, on Monday of this week I met with other members of the Oaks Estate Progress Association, some of whom are in the gallery today, who are working with the community to make sure that the way forward in Oaks Estate takes into account the community views which are present.

The ACT government has committed to the maintenance of roads in Oaks Estate and this year Oaks Estate Road to Hill Street in Oaks Estate was resealed as part of the Roads ACT resurfacing program. Subsequent to this resealing, the roads around Oaks Estate are scheduled for detailed assessment for resealing in the 2016-17 financial year. This year \$605,000 has been approved for the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Oaks Estate Road and Pialligo Avenue as part of the black spot program in 2015-16.

I will just go to some of the comments from Mr Doszpot in regard to crime in Oaks Estate and advise that whilst we have heard from Mr Doszpot that there is a rise in levels of crime, in fact the advice we have from ACT Policing is that crime has decreased most recently. And I will go to some of the content around that too. We have seen that the number of selected offences reported in Oaks Estate for the period January 2015 to February 2015 decreased overall by 57 per cent. Policing operations took on some work from 14 January in response to a letter from an Oaks Estate

resident and Neighbourhood Watch coordinator. A station sergeant, Daryl Neit of the ACT Policing crime reduction unit, made contact with the resident and clarified collation and reporting regimes associated with criminal statistics which appear on the ACT Policing website. And I do note that my colleague Minister Burch also wrote to the residents of Oaks Estate in regard to this process.

The most recent operation in Oaks Estate took place on Wednesday, 11 February this year, consisting of mobile vehicle patrols, random breath testing and traffic enforcement. That resulted in 50 negative screening tests and five traffic infringement notices being issued. During the month of February 2015 there were two traffic targeting incidents and two crime targeting incidents recorded for Oaks Estate.

Sometimes when we think of particular suburbs we do look at what is occurring in our suburb and show concern about criminal statistics, but often they can be a focus. It is important to sometimes do some comparisons. So I thought I would go to the ACT Policing website and have a look at some statistics from Mr Doszpot's particular suburb, Yarralumla, which he has recently moved into. I can advise that the statistics from Yarralumla in 2014 show up to 383 criminal offences. And if we have a look at Oaks Estate, from the ACT Policing website, we see in 2010 there were 67; in 2011, 65; in 2012, 73; a reduction in 2013 to 37; and in 2014, 59; a total of 301. In those five years, there were 301 offences and in one year in Mr Doszpot's suburb there were 383.

In summary, the Oaks Estate master plan that I was talking about responds to concerns raised by the Oaks Estate community regarding the nature of the development that has occurred over time in Oaks Estate and provides more clarity regarding longstanding heritage nomination. It sets a strategic direction for future growth of the village by aiming to identify and balance the land use, the economic, social and environmental opportunities and challenges for the benefit of Oaks Estate. And the roads program examines and provides upgrades and improvement to the roads in Oaks Estate. I commend my amendment to the motion.

**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) (11.54): I thank Mr Doszpot for putting forward this motion today. Perhaps I do not thank him for the tone of his personal commentary, but at least it provides the opportunity to discuss Oaks Estate, which, as he noted, has a very interesting history. It is certainly one of the oldest parts of Canberra. The Greens have been concerned about a wide range of issues for the residents of Oaks Estate for many years. Although it is often a forgotten part of Canberra, I and some of my colleagues have been invited to Oaks Estate on a number of occasions. We have made those visits and had discussions with the residents group.

It is no secret that some residents of Oaks Estate feel somewhat isolated from the rest of Canberra. It is a small community. Along with areas such as Pialligo, Hall, Uriarra and Tharwa, it is not easily slotted in with the rest of the usual government programs and services simply because of where it is and the number of residents. This combination often makes it difficult or perhaps expensive to ensure that the same level of facilities is made available in the area.

Unfortunately, this resulting isolation can also create some concerns for community safety. Mr Gentleman has just made some remarks on this, but I think it is also fair to say that Oaks Estate is a place of hope and inspiration. Members may not be aware that the St Vincent de Paul Society has been quietly creating some incredible results, working with a justice reinvestment framework to promote social inclusion, community safety and positive rehabilitation for some of the estate's more vulnerable residents.

In the last Assembly, as a Greens MLA, I had an opportunity to visit a simple but powerful illustration of this. I saw firsthand how something as basic as a neighbourhood barbecue and some essential garden maintenance can go a long way to breaking down barriers and supporting a sense of place. I understand that since the St Vincent's program has been running in the area residents, and especially ACT Housing tenants, have felt better supported.

There is certainly, of course, still work to be done, but I am pleased that there is progress. Certainly, as the former Minister for Housing, I was aware of the high percentage of public housing on the estate. But I was also aware of how, when the community is supported with the right approach, these distinctions of private and public tenants can be overcome. Staff from my office also spent some time out at the estate talking with both public housing tenants and home owners and advised me that while there are, indeed, some real concerns and tensions, with antisocial behaviour and property damage, these can be worked through if taken on board in a collaborative way.

I think that as a government we can support these sometimes difficult conversations taking place. There is a role to facilitate the village's needs. It is an ageing area and I am hopeful that the master plan process will go some way to identify improvements to the look and the feel of the area—perhaps the vibe of the place, if you were to coin that phrase. This may include issues of perceptions of community safety such as improved passive surveillance, lighting and other practical measures.

I have spent time walking along the riverbank out there. The work done by TAMS on cleaning up the riverbank and removing a large number of the weeds, particularly the willows and the blackberries, made a significant difference to the riverbank area. With the replantings that are going on, I think there has been a significant improvement for an area that had long been neglected. I was very pleased to see that work taking place and the engagement that the community had with that work that TAMS was doing.

What I do know from my visits and my conversations with residents is that Oaks Estate has a real sense of community and that many of its residents are proud of the place and what it might be fair to say are its sometimes quirky characteristics but also very interesting history.

I turn to the specific points raised in today's motion. Firstly on transport issues, I understand that there is quite some frustration in the Oaks Estate community because it is often handy for Queanbeyan residents to cut through it on their way to Canberra,

to the airport or to other places. The traffic levels can therefore be quite high at times. This is exacerbated due to the area being adjacent to light industrial areas—both Queanbeyan and Beard—and thus a fair amount of that traffic is trucks.

This traffic can, of course, make the area unsafe for pedestrians, especially for children, in particular along Railway Street. This was an issue I pursued through TAMS when I was the relevant minister with responsibility for Roads ACT. Of course, this has now passed across to Minister Gentleman as the current minister for roads. He has outlined some of the key steps that TAMS will be taking, including the installation of a new set of traffic lights on the corner of Pialligo Avenue and Oaks Estate Road.

I certainly reject the characterisation put forward by Mr Doszpot that I have taken no interest in Oaks Estate. In that portfolio area I have sought to progress issues that were raised with me as matters of concern and that also were raised directly with TAMS.

Regarding the provision of an ACTION bus service to Oaks Estate, it is correct that there is no dedicated ACTION bus service to Oaks Estate. However, I would like to assure Mr Doszpot that this is not because the government and I have not considered whether we should be providing such a service. The government has considered it a number of times, most recently late last year.

These are things that have to be weighed up as we look at the whole network. Certainly, in the redesign of the network I have looked at these issues and looked at what we can do because I am mindful of the letters that I have written in the past which asked previous ministers whether something could be done.

There is a tricky balance here. The patronage numbers for Oaks Estate are extremely low. There were 84 passengers in February 2015. That is for the whole month. There were 28 passengers for the whole month of January 2015 and 68 passengers in December 2014. Also, six children have term passes, although whether they all go to the same area is not known. ACTION does have an agreement in place with the Qcity bus company for Qcity to provide the services for Oaks Estate. For members' interest, I will provide the detail on these services.

Oaks Estate residents have access to a north-west Queanbeyan loop service which travels via Oaks Estate to Queanbeyan interchange for connecting buses to the territory. It is hourly during peak hours and then there is an on-demand service using the local link service. That is the one that you can ring up and book for an on-demand service to come out and collect you. That service can be booked in advance.

I will reflect on the text of the speech, but I understood that Mr Doszpot said there is no service that goes into Oaks Estate. There is, in fact, a stop in Hazel Street, Oaks Estate that is serviced by Qcity. I accept that it is not as frequent as people would probably care for, but I think, if I was correct in hearing Mr Doszpot's words, that probably was a slight overstatement of the situation on the table.

Qcity has services every day that run into the ACT—to Civic via Kingston, Manuka, Barton, Russell and also services to Woden via Narrabundah and Canberra Hospital.

An alternative option for passengers wishing to catch more regular and direct services to Woden or Civic is to access the bus stops located on Uriarra Road, which I believe are the ones Mr Doszpot was referring to. I acknowledge that they are some distance away, but for those who are able to walk that is an option.

The arrangement between ACTION and Qcity means that Oaks Estate residents can transfer between Qcity and ACTION bus services at no extra cost. Oaks Estate residents can also transfer from an ACTION service to a Qcity service by purchasing a single fare or validating a MyWay card on an ACTION bus within 90 minutes of purchase.

Students may use a Qcity Transit school term ticket to transfer at any time. ACTION regularly meets with Qcity regarding the provision of route and school services to and from Oaks Estate. At this point in time there are no future plans for ACTION to schedule services to or from Oaks Estate as there is an agreement in place with Qcity and ACTION has not been able to identify the resources to do that. But I will continue to look at those options as we develop the ACTION network. There are a number of parts of the ACT where bus services do need to be improved. We have made improvements with ACTION in recent times and I will continue to strive to make those improvements where I can.

That is the best I can say on the buses at this point. I acknowledge I did write last term about this issue. I wrote to ministers advocating for changes to be made. Since I have come into the portfolio I have reflected on those, although I have not been approached by the residents association this term that I can recall. However, I will double-check that too. While we seek to get an outcome on these things, unfortunately I cannot deliver all the outcomes that I would like to with ACTION. That is an ongoing challenge. We will see what we can do to keep improving that.

Regarding the planning issues, there is a need to address a range of concerns. I believe that the recently released Oaks Estate master plan will make some concrete steps towards progress in this area. The government has had a master planning process underway for a number of years for Oaks Estate. I know that there has been considerable discussion with the residents, the Queanbeyan City Council and Housing ACT on the development of the master plan.

I am also aware that residents were concerned that the master planning process, being a process driven by ACTPLA as a planning document, was largely focused on the built environment rather than on social issues. I believe there were similar concerns about the heritage planning being undertaken in the estate.

I understand that this master plan is something like the third round of planning that has been started for Oaks Estate. I believe that the master plan released last December is actually the first to be finalised, so that is a good thing. I certainly share Mr Doszpot's frustration there. To have a process start and then taper off is a very unsatisfactory outcome. I am pleased that this one has actually gone to the point of fruition, because I think it does test the faith of the community when a process is started and is not completed. It is an improvement to actually see this one finalised.

I believe that ACTPLA will now proceed to incorporate this master plan into the territory plan. Mr Gentleman touched on that. A process will be commencing soon to start this work to develop a territory plan variation. The master plan does propose some blocks for land release, which could be a great opportunity to introduce some new residents and potentially new services and activities into the area.

While the role of the master plan is chiefly to address the built environment of an area and not really to work through the social issues, I do think that in the case of Oaks Estate, given the factors of the area that Mr Doszpot touched on, significant changes to what is and is not allowable have clear flow-on effects for all residents. I think that there is some real opportunity.

There are a number of heritage nominations that are still outstanding. I believe that some residents are concerned that these should have been resolved before the master plan was finalised. However, my understanding is that the master plan is neutral on this issue and that heritage determinations can be made irrespective of the master plan. I believe that the government has a draft heritage plan for Oaks Estate, but I do not think that was ever finalised. That again goes back to that issue that I was touching on earlier about making sure that these processes do get finalised.

In any case, it would be preferable if all new developments were in step with the unique character of the area. I trust that this will be addressed through the development application process for each proposal as it comes through, although I note that this will largely not be able to occur until after the territory plan variation is finalised.

I am pleased that the Oaks Estate community garden continues to be so successful. I have heard that there is a proposal for a market garden in the estate, which makes a lot of sense. It is a perfect site adjacent to the river, with therefore rich soils and good access to water.

Madam Speaker, I personally believe that there is a bright future for Oaks Estate. There is a keen and committed community that is working hard to bring together the community activities such as the community garden and use of the community hall, as well as bringing the artists in the community together to perhaps create an artists' village.

There has been a proposal for an artist-in-residence program to be run in Oaks Estate. I think this would be a very feasible proposal, given the site and potential future activities. I think what I have seen around Canberra is that the parts of Canberra that are really vibrant are where residents have come together and started to take the initiative. We see this playing out in all different parts of our city. That is part of my optimism for Oaks Estate because I know that there is a very dedicated group of people who are keen to ensure that the area has a good future. I think that when you have that sort of energy it plays out very strongly for the community involved in many ways.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to discuss Oaks Estate today. I know there are frustrations, but there are also frustrations in other parts of Canberra. That has been a challenge for me in becoming a minister in this place. You cannot get everything done that you want to, but our job is to keep striving to achieve these things and to make sure that we keep listening so that we know what the concerns are, to try to get out to as many of the community meetings as possible so that we can hear these things directly and then to do our best to resolve the issues that our community faces.

**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) (12.09): I am pleased today to speak to this motion and support Mr Gentleman's amendment. Quite clearly, the government is active in both the planning and public housing aspects of Oaks Estate, and with very meaningful results. Our public housing community in Oaks Estate is close knit and strongly engaged in community life. The public housing properties at Oaks Estate are an important part of our housing stock, and they are home to tenants from very diverse backgrounds and life experiences. There are 78 public housing properties at Oaks Estate, which is around 35 per cent of the housing, and they represent a significant proportion. These properties tend to be multi-unit complexes built on a scale appropriate to the size of the community. The properties are maintained by Housing ACT and the tenants are actively supported. Where issues are identified, whether by housing tenants or other residents, the government has responded.

Key to our response has been head leasing a number of properties to St Vincent de Paul to provide community-based support for people who have homes in Oaks Estate, and Mr Rattenbury has already talked about some of the work that has been done out there. First commencing in 2009, St Vincent de Paul provides tenancy and case management for more than 50 per cent of the public housing properties. The model provided by St Vincent de Paul focuses on place-based support. Case managers work on site from a dedicated community room and a drop-in centre. St Vincent de Paul also provides an outreach service to public housing tenants on site. Importantly, each and every social housing tenant in Oaks Estate, not just those at St Vincent de Paul properties, has access to the services. This means more intensive support is available for tenants, and early intervention workers are readily accessible.

Specifically, the supports provided on site are one-to-one case management, community engagement activities, and referrals and connections to other service providers, such as community transport. The on-site services directly mitigate some of the concerns that have been raised about public housing.

In relation to antisocial behaviour, on-site agency presence provides an early intervention response, and St Vincent de Paul has reported that since establishing the on-site presence there has been a notable reduction in crime and violence, and Mr Gentleman provided some figures on that in his speech earlier.



The community development aspects of this program have also been particularly successful, feeding into the close-knit and engaged nature of the community which I have talked about. The government cannot create a strong community; we can facilitate that through policy and legislation, but it is when a community comes together and starts working on building a community amongst neighbours that a community becomes vibrant. That is what Mr Rattenbury was referring to in his speech and his experience in working with the Oaks Estate community previously.

In December 2014 Housing and Community Services and St Vincent de Paul jointly conducted qualitative research on the community regeneration outcomes achieved through the place-based supports. The key findings of the research indicate that participants have experienced increased feelings of personal and community safety, improvements in the physical environment of Oaks Estate and better links to community support and other services through the on-site presence of St Vincent de Paul services. This has increased participants' feelings of resilience, and most acknowledged a key benefit of on-site workers from St Vincent de Paul was their early intervention to resolve community conflict. The valuable work of ACT Housing and St Vincent de Paul in Oaks Estate is important to recognise as we talk about the future of this very important community. The holistic nature of the master plan process, as Mr Gentleman's amendment makes quite clear, provides an ideal platform to build on the unique physical and community characteristics of Oaks Estate.

I have not been to Oaks Estate; I received an invitation to meet with representatives from the community yesterday, and we are working out a time to meet with that community. I am very happy to meet with the community and visit Oaks Estate. I have been in this position as minister for less than a couple of months, and there has been lots of work to be done in the public housing realm. But, as I said, I am very happy to meet with any members of our community. I have had an invitation to meet with this community, and I will meet with the Oaks Estate community and listen to their concerns. The ACT government will act, as they have done, on building a strong community in Oaks Estate.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (12.14): I will speak very briefly to the amendment and to Mr Doszpot's motion about Oaks Estate. Mr Gentleman's amendment removes any reference to housing, including public housing, that was in the original motion. There are those in Oaks Estate who feel that the public housing has been neglected and not maintained to a sufficient level. Of the 78 public housing properties in Oaks Estate, they all appear to have been constructed before 1974. They are ageing and they require maintenance. I also understand they probably have high energy efficiency costs. It would be good if the ACT government could bring them up to a modern standard.

It is open to the ACT government to implement a salt-and-pepper approach to public housing, and that is a valuable way of looking at public housing. However, some residents of Oaks Estate feel it has become a pocket of social disadvantage, a concentrated area of disadvantage, and that perhaps the salt and peppering has been a bit too concentrated in that area. The salt-and-pepper approach certainly helps to create a community with good role models for all residents. I think it is a good approach, but we do not want to overpopulate any particular area with disadvantage.

The people of Oaks Estate, in my understanding, want to feel valued and respected. Looking after their area, providing them with amenity and the services like other suburbs and other residents of Canberra receive would go some way towards assisting those residents of Oaks Estate to feel they are valued and respected members of the Canberra community.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (12.16): I begin by thanking Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion to the Assembly today and for raising the concerns the residents have raised directly with him. I have also had meetings with representatives from Neighbourhood Watch at Oaks Estate and they have raised concerns directly with me relating to my portfolio responsibilities of corrections. Mr Doszpot's motion is very much the words and the direct call of the residents, and he needs to be commended on bringing those concerns to the Assembly in the purest form he could, as the residents have conveyed them to him. It is disappointing that the government's amendment disregards some of the concerns the residents have raised, but it is encouraging to hear that ministers are finally taking the opportunity and listening to the concerns of residents from the often-forgotten corner of Canberra—Oaks Estate.

In relation to corrections, residents have raised with me a concern that ties in with the social housing that is concentrated in the estate—that is, the perception of a large number of parolees coming out of AMC and being housed in the facilities at Oaks Estate. I do not think the residents or anyone in the community has too severe a concern about that practice, but the issue arises as to how many individuals under these orders should go into one place before problems in areas start to be created. Yes, Oaks Estate is a small village of Canberra that seemingly has a higher concentration than the rest of the city of public and social housing. It is prudent that proper consideration be given to how many people on correctional orders should be put into a concentrated space that is relatively isolated from the main parts of the city.

We have heard today that public transport is an issue. For a lot of people coming out of jail, having their own form of transport is not normally available to them, and public transport is relied on heavily. We as a city and those members opposite as a government have a social responsibility to give these individuals the best chance and the best opportunities to succeed in their rehabilitation. Simply putting them into an area that isolates them and puts them amongst other individuals often struggling with similar mental illnesses and substance dependence issues ultimately is setting them up to fail.

Just this morning I spoke to representatives from St Vincent de Paul about the work they are continuing to do out there. They need to be commended at this point on the work they are doing. I understand that it is largely funded through an ACT Health initiative, but this is an area where a not-for-profit organisation is able to do a better job than government has in the past in helping to support members of the community. Not only that but they have taken control of a number of houses which were typically drug dens or had squatters in them and which have now been cleaned up and are used productively and effectively. Congratulations to St Vincent de Paul for their continued work in our community.

I commend Mr Doszpot for the motion today. It is one of those rare occasions where you see Mr Doszpot getting angry at some of the things that have been happening. The passion he brings to representing his constituents needs to be commended.

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

**Sitting suspended from 12.21 to 2.30 pm.**

## **Questions without notice**

### **Health Directorate—openness and transparency**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health and it concerns data integrity in the ACT Health Directorate. Minister, on 12 March the Auditor-General announced that she will conduct a performance audit of data integrity in the ACT Health Directorate and consider “the integrity of activity-based funding data reported by the ACT Health Directorate to the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority”. In addition, the audit will “report on the effectiveness of ACT Health’s management of the data”. I also note that the ACT Health quarterly report for July to September 2014, which would normally be released in December, has not yet been released. Minister, what advice have you received concerning the need for a performance audit of data integrity in the ACT Health Directorate?

**MR CORBELL:** I have not received any such advice. The auditor has chosen to audit this area, and the government welcomes the audit. We will work with the auditor as appropriate to provide her with whatever assistance she requires to allow her to conduct the audit. I think it is sensible that we audit the accuracy of data collection and reporting, because the data that goes to the independent pricing authority is important in determining appropriate levels of payment by the authority through the federal government. I think it is a sensible approach. There are no specific issues of concern that have been brought to my attention, but it is an audit that will, I trust, confirm the adequacy of the Health Directorate’s capacity to report that data to the pricing authority. If it identifies issues of concern, we will obviously use that audit to further improve practice.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

**MR HANSON:** Prior to the announcement, what have you done personally to ensure integrity of data within the ACT Health Directorate?

**MR CORBELL:** I have, as I have right across the health portfolio, ensured that I am advised, to the greatest extent that I reasonably can be, of activities and emerging issues within the Health Directorate. There has been nothing brought to my attention that would suggest that there are any emerging issues in relation to this particular area.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Minister, is the fact that the ACT Health quarterly report for July to September 2014 has not yet been released related to the effectiveness of ACT Health's management of data?

**MR CORBELL:** No.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Minister, what are you doing to ensure that the ACT Health quarterly report, as discussed, is released, and what is the reason for the hold-up?

**MR CORBELL:** I have given my agreement for those reports to be released. I assume there is some process within the directorate that has to be finalised administratively to allow those reports to be released. But I have indicated to the directorate that those reports should be released.

### **Greyhound racing—live baiting**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Minister for Racing and Gaming. Minister, on 17 February you described the reports on live baiting in the greyhound racing industry as “truly shocking” and said that you had ordered the commission to investigate the matter further. Minister, have you ordered the commission to investigate this matter? If yes, when? If no, when will you order this investigation, and will you table the terms of reference?

**MS BURCH:** I have had discussions with the commissioner about this. It is my understanding that he has spoken with the greyhound club or some of his officials have visited the site. One of the key questions I had was: do any of the trainers or owners that were recognised in that *Four Corners* report have connections here? It is my understanding that one trainer who was identified in that report raced here two or three years ago.

This is something the commission will have an eye to over time. I am happy to bring advice, as this is something the public has a strong interest in. I know many members in this Assembly have had a lot of correspondence damning the practice, which was absolutely disgraceful. I have confidence that the greyhound industry here abides by all the integrity that the code of conduct of the industry requires.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, when you directed the Gambling and Racing Commission to make inquiries as to whether interstate trainers who use live baiting had operated in the ACT, what were the outcomes? Will you be issuing a report from the review that is being conducted?

**MS BURCH:** I think I indicated in my first answer that there was one trainer identified that was here once. But I will get an update, and I am quite happy to bring back, probably tomorrow, at the end of question time, some information about where

that is up to. Will I be issuing a report on it? I had not planned to, but I think a statement in the Assembly tomorrow, following question time, with an update, would suffice.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, have you written to your interstate counterparts to prioritise the issues of animal abuse in the greyhound racing industry in your next meeting with them? When did you do this? What was the response?

**MS BURCH:** Yes, I have written. Tomorrow, when I bring the advice, I am quite happy to table a copy of that letter. The meeting was actually scheduled for sometime in May. Advice has come through to my office today that that has been deferred. So, unfortunately, I will not have a chance to have a face-to-face discussion with my colleagues on that because the meeting has been bumped to no fixed date in the future.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, what investigations have you initiated to ensure that live baiting does not occur in the ACT, given the RSPCA has alleged that there was one incident of live baiting in Canberra?

**MS BURCH:** I am confident, and the advice to me is, that there is no baiting—absolutely no baiting—here in the ACT. But, as I have said, I am quite happy to come back with an updated bit of advice tomorrow.

### **Mental health—secure facility**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the health minister. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on how the secure mental health unit is progressing?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Dr Bourke for his question. In 2012, as members would be aware, the government provided funding to build a secure mental health facility for the city. This is an important project. We need a dedicated capacity to deal with mental health clients who are caught up in the criminal justice system and for whom spending time alternatively in the AMC, the Alexander Maconochie Centre, is not the best outcome, either for the operation of the prison or, indeed, for the person's clinical care. \$1.2 million was provided in the 2007-08 budget and a further \$2 million in the 2012-13 budget to enable the necessary planning and design works. \$43.49 million was provided in the most recent budget for construction.

I am pleased to say that work is progressing well. The site has now been cleared and work on the preliminary sketch plans commenced in November 2013. We had detailed community consultation following that, and the 100 per cent preliminary sketch plans were approved by ACT Health in July last year. ACT Health have also concluded the model of care for the facility, which is focused on providing a continuum of security needs for clients, based on their acuity of illness and their assessed risk of harm to themselves and others. All of this information is publicly available for people to look at.

The government has awarded a contract to our head contractor to commence works. Richard Crookes Constructions was commissioned on 30 September last year. Members would be aware that the DA process was modified, through an act of this place, to ensure a timely decision on whether or not the project could proceed. Those processes have been completed. As I said, the former Quamby facility has been demolished. This work was completed on 19 February this year.

So we are moving forward in a very timely manner with the development of this important facility that will provide improved mental health facilities for those high care needs clients who are caught up in criminal justice matters as well, providing a suitable alternative to them being incarcerated in the AMC.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how will the secure mental health unit improve the ACT's mental health care system?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary question. This will provide us, for the first time, with a dedicated, secure, 24-hour in-patient mental health facility for people involved with the criminal justice system, as well as civil consumers of general mental health services who pose an unacceptable risk in other healthcare settings. This will provide us with a 25-bed facility. It will provide individually tailored treatment, with programs that help to maximise the individuals' functioning. The model of care is very much focused on integrating these services in the context of the broader ACT mental health framework and it is focused on recovery and supporting people to make the transition out of acute care settings into other appropriate settings, either in the community or elsewhere, as deemed appropriate by the courts, if the person is subject to a criminal justice process.

People admitted to the secure mental health facility will be cared for under the provisions of our new mental health treatment and care legislation, which was adopted by the Assembly late last year. That is a very important reform of our mental health treatment and care law: a contemporary, modern, up-to-date and much more nuanced mental health care and treatment framework to respond more specifically to the challenging issues that often arise with acute episodes of mental illness. This new facility will be a very, very important step forward in the delivery of a comprehensive range of mental health care for people in our community.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, could you tell us more about the services proposed to be delivered by the secure mental health unit?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Ms Porter for her question. It is important to stress that the types of behaviours that we will need to respond to and care for, in the context of the new facility, will include people with moderate to severe mental illness. Most commonly, we will see diagnoses such as schizophrenia and mood disorder with related psychosis—very complex and difficult behaviours.

The model of care is focused on ensuring that we can provide for those types of diagnoses. The focus will be very much on ensuring that we have a mixture of both acute care beds and rehabilitation beds in the new facility. We will need to make sure that we network with mental health services through our community mental health centres as well. Once people are discharged, we will need to make sure that they are closely linked with the forensic medical and mental health services provided at the Hume health centre at the AMC, because people may transition between the two facilities, depending on the nature of their disorder or illness and how acute it is.

These are the types of issues that will be at play. This will give us that capacity, as we move forward, to deliver a continuum of care for mental health treatment.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Minister, what are the proposed next stages of work on the facility?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Ms Fitzharris for the supplementary. Construction is programmed for completion by August next year; final sketch plans for the design are scheduled to be finalised and approved by the end of June this year; and we expect formal construction to commence at the beginning of next year. We are on time in terms of that construction schedule to date.

The workforce planning is also very important. Right now, ACT Health is considering a range of options to ensure that the facility is fully prepared and ready to go once construction is complete. That includes looking at scholarships for staff to facilitate their development in the area of forensic mental health and making sure we have the right relationships with key tertiary and training organisations that will be providing support to the people who will be asked to work in the facility.

Also, there will need to be formalised arrangements with interstate secure mental health facilities for the provision of clinical skills training and to ensure that there are opportunities for placement for ACT staff in those other facilities to improve their perspective and experience and make sure they can continue to provide a very strong and capable service for the running of our new secure mental health facility.

### **Uriarra Village—solar farm**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, the development application to build a large-scale solar project at Uriarra Village, a hundred metres from homes, has been lodged but a decision is yet to be announced. Recent media reports suggest that the ACT government have been in negotiations with the proponent of this solar project at Uriarra Village. Minister, have the residents of Uriarra who will be impacted by this project been informed of any outcomes of these negotiations? If not, why not?

**MR CORBELL:** I thank Mr Wall for the question. Not at this stage, Mr Wall, but I anticipate that, once there is something concrete to report, there will be the opportunity to discuss those matters and inform residents accordingly.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, has the ACT government at any time offered any compensation or financial contribution to the developer of this project, Elementus Energy?

**MR CORBELL:** No.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Minister, what discussions have you had with the Minister for Planning about this project since the DA was lodged, and have you ever requested that it be called in?

**MR CORBELL:** It would not be for me to ask that the development be called in; that would be a matter for the proponent. In relation to discussions I have had with the Minister for Planning, I speak to the Minister for Planning about a broad range of matters. That is as it should be.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Minister, what discussions have taken place with residents of Uriarra Village about the proposal to build a large-scale solar project a hundred metres from their homes since the DA was lodged?

**MR CORBELL:** I am not involved in those particular processes. With regard to the achievement of development approval for the site under the government's solar auction process, the responsibility for that rests entirely with the proponent. It is the responsibility of the proponent and, once the Planning and Development Act processes are engaged, the responsibility of the Planning and Land Authority, to notify residents and to engage appropriately through the processes set out under the Planning and Development Act.

### ***Skywhale—sale***

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, when was the government made aware that Global Ballooning, the owner of the *Skywhale*, is up for sale?

**MR BARR:** We were not. I certainly was not. The first I heard about it was when I read it in the paper.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, what due diligence was conducted on Global Ballooning before the government gifted the *Skywhale* to that company?

**MR BARR:** The usual due diligence associated with government procurement, Madam Speaker.



**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, how much is the *Skywhale* valued at in this sale? What will the territory get from the \$300,000 that it paid for the balloon? How will it be ensured that any contractual arrangements are honoured by the new owner?

**MR BARR:** The government has no further contractual arrangements in relation to the *Skywhale*. The contractual arrangements related to commissioning of the work and a certain number of flights in the territory, and all of those contractual arrangements have concluded. The government did not take an equity stake in an asset that has a declining value, given it has a certain life.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** It is interesting that those opposite would pursue a line of questioning indicating that they wanted public ownership of a balloon. Let me say this, Madam Speaker: balloons and ballooning is an incredibly expensive activity.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The *Skywhale* always gets people going.

**MR BARR:** I find those interjections amusing, given the position of the shadow treasurer in the past. He wanted taxpayers to fund 100 balloons in the centenary year. When it comes to ballooning, we have a balloon spectacular that has a budget. That is the entirety of the money the territory government will spend on balloons. Let me repeat: it is an incredibly expensive activity, like fireworks displays—hundreds of thousands of dollars are associated with their delivery. I do not get that many questions about how much money is spent on fireworks displays.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, what discussions are you and/or the government having with Global Ballooning regarding its sale and the continuing links of the *Skywhale* to the ACT?

**MR BARR:** I am having none because it is a private company having a sale. So I am having no discussions. In relation to novelty balloons, there will be novelty balloons as part of the balloon spectacular each year.

**Mr Smyth:** But not *Skywhale*?

**MR BARR:** *Skywhale* may or may not be selected in the future. I will make this point, Madam Speaker—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**MR BARR:** They are like children. Well might you shake your head, Madam Speaker, because that motherly demeanour comes to the fore when the children are misbehaving, as we are seeing here. Let me be clear—if I can be, uninterrupted, even for just 15 seconds—and make the point that we will not have the same novelty balloons each year. We need to ensure there is variety in the novelty balloons that fly in—

**Mr Smyth:** It's the symbol of centenary. You've let it go.

**MR BARR:** And the centenary was two years ago. That is so 2013, Mr Smyth. I know you are trapped in the past, Mr Smyth—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order! Address the chair.

**MR BARR:** but we are focused on the future and there will be new and different novelty balloons that are part of the balloon spectacular in the years ahead. That may or may not involve *Skywhale*. It certainly will not involve *Skywhale* flying every year.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call Ms Fitzharris, I know that ballooning is fun, but I am sure Ms Fitzharris will have a question of more gravitas and I would like to hear it.

**Mr Barr:** Involving less hot air, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It may indeed involve less hot air.

### **Workers compensation—Comcare**

**MS FITZHARRIS:** My important question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. Minister, why has the government taken the decision to exit Comcare and create its own workers compensation scheme for the ACT public service?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. As the Assembly would be aware, the ACT government recently announced that it has decided to cease obtaining its workers compensation insurance from the commonwealth workers compensation scheme, Comcare. Instead, we will work with staff of the trade unions and other stakeholders to develop a new scheme for the ACT public sector workers within the territory's own legislative jurisdiction.

There were a number of considerations which prompted the ACT government's decision to leave the Comcare scheme. First and foremost, it was considered that the needs of the ACT's public sector would be better met by a workers compensation scheme that was under the territory's own jurisdiction, a scheme run by the territory for the territory.

The ACT is currently the only Australian state or territory that insures its public sector workforce outside its own regulatory jurisdiction. This limits the territory's scope and ability to adjust the regulatory framework and resourcing of claims services to optimise performance.

The community expects public funds to be used responsibly and in its best interests, and rightly so. Relying on another government to respond to community expectations in this respect increases the risk that limited territory resources will be spent in a way which fails to maximise the benefits to the territory.

As you would be aware, Madam Speaker, the ACT public sector is diverse and covers many frontline service delivery workers, including bus drivers, rangers, paramedics, teachers, as well as a range of office workers. By designing a new workers compensation scheme within the ACT government's legislative jurisdiction, the territory will have the opportunity to create a scheme which more appropriately reflects the diversity of our workforce and ensures a focus on improving health and wellbeing. This will benefit both the ACT public sector workforce and the wider ACT community.

The government intends to design a workers compensation scheme that will enhance work safety within the ACT public sector by encouraging both workers and employers to take responsibility for injury management. The new scheme's primary focus will be on promoting recovery and improving return to work outcomes for injured workers. However, it is also important to note that the workers compensation premium for the ACT public sector has risen significantly over the last five years. Increases of this magnitude are not sustainable. Consequently, the new scheme's focus on supporting workers to return to work and improving outcomes for workers is also expected to drive some cost efficiencies.

There is extensive evidence that demonstrates that work is good for health and wellbeing and, conversely, that work absence, work disability and unemployment can have a negative impact on a person's health and wellbeing. Contemporary workers compensation schemes direct resources into a worker's recovery from their injuries in order to assist with a return to work at the earliest practical opportunity. In addition, the new scheme will promote accessibility and transparency by making the claims process easier to navigate and less stressful for injured workers and service providers.

I have met now with many unions, and the unions have pointed out that any new scheme should recognise the health benefits of work and the importance of compensation services having a focus on employees' recovery and return to work with, of course, the appropriate support to injured workers once they get back to work. I am confident that, by working closely with workers, unions and other key stakeholders, the new ACT public sector workers compensation arrangements will be better suited to the territory's workforce and will deliver better outcomes both for injured workers and the ACT community.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Minister, what alternatives is the government considering, regarding a new workers compensation scheme for ACT public sector workers?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The government is committed to ensuring that five design principles underpin the new scheme, namely: one, enhancing work safety by encouraging all parties to take responsibility for injury management; two, promoting recovery and return to work by raising awareness of the health benefits of work, focusing compensation services on recovery and return to work and supporting employer-worker mutual obligations on return to work; three, guaranteeing quality long-term compensation and care and support for seriously injured workers; four, driving cost efficiencies by making the scheme more efficient and focusing on return to work outcomes; and, five, promoting accessibility and transparency to make the claims process easier and less stressful for ACT public sector workers and service providers.

To assist the consultation process, the government has circulated a possible scheme design based on these principles. Like all workers compensation schemes, the proposed new scheme provides income support, medical care and rehabilitation services to help to restore workers' earning capacity.

The payment structures under the proposal are designed to target compensation services towards recovery and return to work. The proposed new scheme is a hybrid approach in which workers with serious injuries will receive lifetime cover for medical, allied health and rehabilitation services. They will also be entitled to incapacity payments for lost income up to retirement age.

For workers who do not meet the serious injury threshold, compensation benefits, medical treatment and rehabilitation services will be subject to time limits. In addition, continuing receipt of payments will require active participation in the return to work process. The proposed changes will not have any retrospective application. The new scheme will only apply to public sector claims for injuries that occur after the commencement of the new scheme.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, are public sector workers being consulted about these changes?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes. Thank you, Dr Bourke, for the question. The ACT government values stakeholder input, and public sector workers and other stakeholders have been invited to participate in broad consultation on the proposed scheme design.

An announcement about the government's decision to exit the Comcare scheme and establish a new scheme was made to public sector workers via the Head of Service message on 26 February. Detailed information about the features of the consultation draft scheme design has been made available to the public sector workforce via the intranet site.

In addition to this, letters have been sent to existing Comcare claimants to reassure them that the proposed changes will have no impact on their existing claims, which will continue to be managed by Comcare.

Information about the proposed new scheme has also been provided to other stakeholders, including public sector trade unions, insurers and ACT statutory authorities affected by the change.

The Head of Service announcement also outlined the consultation process, which is being led by the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

At the request of Unions ACT, I have extended the consultation period to 8 May 2015. As part of this process, officers from the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate are providing information sessions about the proposed changes to stakeholders, at the request of directorates or agencies.

All stakeholders, including public sector workers, are invited to make submissions about the proposed scheme design. These submissions will be vital in informing the government about stakeholder views and will assist in the final design of the new ACT workers compensation scheme for the public sector.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, when might the new scheme commence, and how will it be administered?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary question. As I have indicated, the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate is actively engaging stakeholders on the design of the new scheme. The start date for a new public sector scheme will be dependent on the feedback we receive and the outcomes of that consultation.

In relation to the proposed new scheme's administration, implementing a new scheme will require the ACT government to take responsibility for regulatory, administrative and scheme management functions that are currently being provided by the commonwealth under the Comcare scheme. I expect that regulatory compliance and enforcement functions will be performed by WorkSafe ACT, which has responsibility for ensuring compliance within the existing ACT private sector workers compensation scheme. I expect the Industrial Court will have the jurisdiction to hear disputes that arise under the new scheme. This approach will ensure an effective and efficient dispute resolution mechanism and is consistent with disputation arrangements under the ACT private sector workers compensation scheme.

Under the proposal, the territory would access improved claims management and policy services by selecting a private insurer to underwrite the scheme. I emphasise that the proposed new scheme will have no impact on the ACT private sector workers compensation scheme, which will continue to operate in parallel to the public sector scheme. Similarly, public sector workers with existing claims who are injured prior to

the commencement of the new public sector scheme will also be unaffected and will continue to have their claims determined, compensated and managed under the Comcare scheme.

### **Childcare—centres**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, yesterday, 17 March, in question time, in response to questions about the decision to resume land currently occupied by the Manuka occasional childcare centre, you indicated that Mocca would be offered first refusal on the Montgomery Oval land which currently houses Telopea Park School tennis courts. You indicated the government would be providing funds to rebuild those courts. You also indicated that Mocca does not have the funds to rebuild and that the government would not be funding the new centre. Given that, what assurances can you provide to families who use this service that they will not be disadvantaged and without a facility in the immediate area for any period of time?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Doszpot for the question. Obviously the sequence of development requires the replacement facilities to be built before the Services Club is rebuilt on the Mocca site. So not only would new sporting facilities need to be constructed for the Telopea school but the new childcare centre would need to be constructed. So that there will be a seamless move from the old centre to the new centre, the new centre will be built before there is any movement away from the old centre.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, why can you be so certain that a new childcare facility for 100 places will be built?

**MR BARR:** Why am I so certain? Because the government will release land for that specific purpose. There is significant interest in the market. I have already had approaches from other childcare centre operators wanting to access sites in the area. They have indicated that if Mocca does not wish to take up that first option then they will be in to take up the option, should Mocca pass up that opportunity.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, when will construction of the new childcare facility begin, and when is it expected to be fully operational?

**MR BARR:** That is, of course, subject to development approval processes. But, as I indicated in my response to Mr Doszpot's first question, clearly, new facilities need to be constructed for the Telopea school before that site becomes available. The childcare centre site construction would then commence. So there is a sequence here that needs to be achieved in order to have continuity of service provision in terms of the sporting amenity for the Telopea school, childcare provision for residents in the inner south and, ultimately, a new Services Club.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, why was money offered to build new tennis courts but not a new childcare facility?

**MR BARR:** Because tennis courts tend not to be commercially viable, whereas the provision of childcare centres is something that the private sector can and does regularly undertake in the territory.

### **Domestic Animal Services—dogs**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, I refer to an incident in December 2013 when 27 dogs were found to be living in poor health in houses in Macquarie and Ainslie. The dogs were only discovered in December 2013, despite persistent complaints from neighbours dating back to February 2012. DAS first visited the property in January 2010. Minister, why did it take DAS 22 months after receiving their first complaint to rescue the dogs?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am not aware of the specifics of that case, Mr Coe. I will seek some further advice. I am happy to provide you with detailed information, either in the chamber or by way of a briefing from the directorate.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** With that in mind, I imagine this will have to be taken on notice—that is, what has happened to those 27 dogs that were seized in December 2013?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will check on the specifics of those dogs. The general practice would be that they would go to the Domestic Animal Services shelter on Mugga Lane, where they would be tested for their suitability to be re-homed. Clearly, if the dogs had suffered some maltreatment, they may have needed time to regain their wellbeing. DAS works very hard to re-home dogs through a range of measures, including people coming to the pound to get dogs. There is a website and a working collaboration with the RSPCA to maximise the re-homing rate and give animals a new chance. There also can be issues if dogs have been seized, as there are legal steps owners might be able to take to retrieve them. That is why I would need to look at the specifics of the matter Mr Coe is asking about.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, in light of seeking further information, were you or the directorate aware of any incidents that may have resulted in dogs perishing at properties in question between January 2010 and December 2013? If so, what was done?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I will check that information and provide it to the Assembly.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, have you received a briefing from the directorate since the story relating to this issue was published in the *Canberra Times* earlier this year?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I do not recall having a specific discussion with the directorate on this issue, but I certainly have had a number of matters brought to my attention, particularly by the RSPCA, who have put the view that there are shortcomings in the way that ACT legislation operates that have meant that they feel that there are barriers to getting action on some of these sorts of matters. I have indicated to the RSPCA that I will work with them to look at amendments to the legislation, and I have asked the directorate to undertake discussions directly with the RSPCA and provide me with a brief on what changes to the legislation may be required in order to improve animal welfare in these sorts of cases.

### **Education—teachers**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the minister for education. Minister, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group recently finalised its report into teacher quality in Australia. What were the findings of the committee and how is the ACT government responding to the committee's report?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Porter for the question. Research tells us that the quality of the teacher is paramount to achieving quality student outcomes. Hence the importance of giving our future teachers the best possible preparation cannot be overstated.

The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group focused particularly on teacher preparation. Its report provided 38 recommendations. The recommendations covered five themes. The first was stronger quality assurance of teacher education courses. The second was rigorous selection for entry to teacher education courses. The third was improved and structured practical experience for teacher education students. The fourth was robust assessment of graduates to ensure classroom readiness. And the fifth was national research and workforce planning capabilities. I understand the Australian government has accepted 37 of those recommendations.

It is very important that TEMAG recommendations are implemented successfully if future teachers and students in our schools are to benefit fully. The implementation must be well considered, well researched, broadly accepted and sustainable.

I think that the recommendations are very practical. However, I want the outcomes for the ACT to be broader than simply refining and improving current processes and procedures. It is important that our approach is innovative and creative. Our innovation and creativity were recognised through three examples in the report: the Down South partnership between ACU and St Mary MacKillop College; the University of Canberra's teacher secondment program; and the common practicum assessment tool used by both universities. They were recognised in the national response to the TEMAG review.



Other great examples of the ACT leading the way include: the introduction of literacy and numeracy testing to teacher recruitment in the directorate; the ACT teacher mentor program; the Macquarie Primary School-UC teaching and research clinics; and the common TQI platform for teachers' portfolios. I am particularly interested in improving the practicum experience and building university and school partnerships.

The TQI will lead and coordinate the ACT implementation. The TQI was established to improve teacher quality and to enhance the status of our teaching profession. It has a fine record of working collaboratively with all education stakeholders in the ACT. This work complements the work that I have already asked the TQI to undertake on professional experience.

I have absolute confidence that the TQI, and the teaching profession as a whole, will rise to the challenge and improve quality. Every teacher that I have met has a great passion for their profession and an absolute commitment to do their best each and every day in the classroom.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, could you talk further on the role the Teacher Quality Institute and mandatory professional registration play in relation to teacher quality and how the TQI is working with universities to ensure all pre-service teachers are of the highest level of professionalism and are school ready?

**MS BURCH:** The Teacher Quality Institute was established to improve teacher quality and to enhance the status of the teaching profession. One of its key regulatory responsibilities is to register all teachers seeking to work in ACT schools. This ensures that our teachers are appropriately qualified and continue to uphold the standards of the teaching profession.

The maintenance of teacher registration is dependent on active engagement in ongoing professional learning that must be closely aligned with the Australian professional standards for teachers or the Australian professional standards for principals. Schools and teachers can determine the professional learning that best fits with the needs of the school and the individual teacher. Through its accreditation of professional learning, the institute is continuing to raise the bar for teacher quality in the ACT. The 2007 House of Representatives report *Top of the Class* noted that "ensuring high quality teacher education is a first and critical step in delivering high quality teaching in schools".

The TQI is the only body authorised to accredit initial teacher education programs in the ACT. The procedures for the accreditation are nationally agreed. Students graduating from initial teacher education programs must have been assessed as meeting the graduate level of the Australian professional standards for teachers and must have completed a minimum amount of professional experience in schools. The minimum for graduate level programs is 60 days, and it is 80 days for undergraduate programs.

The institute was key to the development of a common professional experience assessment tool that is now used by both local universities to ensure a consistent and rigorous assessment of classroom readiness.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Minister, how important is the requirement of ongoing professional learning to ensuring continued best practice in teaching?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. We know that continuing professional development is the hallmark of any profession. In teaching, the learning profession, continuing learning is fundamental to teachers maintaining their currency of knowledge and practice. Teachers must be responsive to new research, evaluative data and the particular learning needs of their students.

Ongoing professional learning is a requirement of the annual renewal of teacher registration. The TQI professional learning framework enables teachers to get the most out of their professional learning. Teachers identify their own professional learning needs and goals appropriate for their career stage. They engage in a range of professional learning activities that directly go to the practice of teaching.

More than simply engaging in professional learning, teachers must record and reflect on the professional learning they undertake, assessing its impact on their practice. The TQI mantra is “continuing learning, reflective practice, professional growth”. Research shows that, at its most effective, professional learning develops the individual and collective capacity of teachers across the school, within a culture of shared responsibility for enhancing student learning as the contingency of success.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how will your decision to enforce a mandatory literacy and numeracy test for all those seeking to work in ACT public schools give parents confidence in the quality of teachers in ACT government schools?

**MS BURCH:** I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in this. Modelling high expectations is important to the learning process. I believe that it is crucial that our teachers are capable of modelling high standards of literacy and numeracy for our students. Our community expects this of our teachers.

Education ministers agreed, when approving the national accreditation processes for initial teacher undergraduate programs, that personal literacy and numeracy for graduates from initial teacher education programs should be broadly equivalent to the top 30 per cent of the population.

The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership was tasked with the development of an appropriate test to be used by universities. I chose to move earlier than the national implementation time line. I asked the directorate to work with AITSL to trial the new assessment tool with new teacher recruits in 2014. The test will apply more broadly to applicants this year, prior to national implementation next year.

From 2016, all graduates from initial teacher education programs must meet the agreed standard. Therefore, it will not be necessary for the directorate to continue testing as all teachers will undergo such testing. I think it is worth saying here that if there is any delay in that national implementation, we will not step away from the rigor that we apply to the recruiting of our teachers.

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

### **Supplementary answer to question without notice Disability services—funding**

**MS BURCH:** During yesterday's question time there were questions to me from Mr Wall and Ms Lawder in regard to the national disability insurance scheme. I can inform the Assembly that Disability ACT are working directly with providers to identify any financial impact associated with a delay in participants phasing in to the NDIS. A joint community government working group involving National Disability Services ACT is developing a consistent and transparent response for impacted organisations.

To date, Disability ACT has made a payment of under \$20,000 to one service provider to assist in this way. Since the beginning of this year, four additional service providers have identified that they have continued to provide services to clients who have not yet phased in to the NDIS.

The government is working individually with each of these organisations to quantify the financial impacts. The total value of reimbursements for these four organisations is unknown at this stage, as they are preparing those detailed costings. Five providers have identified financial impacts from delayed phasing in of a small number of clients, and further advice will be sought from organisations about the extent of that financial impact.

### **Planning—Oaks Estate**

Debate resumed.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (3.22): I thank Mr Doszpot for his motion and Mr Gentleman for his amendment today. Undoubtedly, Oaks Estate has a long and storied history, and it is indeed a strong and proud community—an integral part of the ACT but one with a distinct identity of its own.

Mr Gentleman's amendment today goes to heritage values, suitable housing, community amenity, transport and safety. ACT directorates have made these issues their focus and will continue to work on them.

As the Minister for Planning, Mr Gentleman, has outlined, the Oaks Estate master plan has been finalised and considered by government. The master plan seeks to improve traffic movement and harmonise land use to maintain the existing village character. It recognises and supports the unique character of Oaks Estate but allows new opportunities to revitalise the village.

Minister Rattenbury in his contribution observed that Territory and Municipal Services have a significant role to play in Oaks Estate. As I understand it, they are present several times each week to deliver litter picking, cleaning maintenance, horticultural maintenance, herbicide spraying and mowing programs. In addition, when illegal dumping is identified, it is placed on the TAMS program for removal. Grass mowing has been an issue over this summer. I am advised that the last mow in Oaks Estate was completed a little over two weeks ago as part of the regular mowing program.

The Minister for Housing in her contribution noted that the directorate is working closely with key stakeholders and the wider community to ensure that public housing meets residents' needs and properly supports vulnerable members of the community. Through a partnership with experienced providers such as St Vincent de Paul, we are working to best deliver support and accommodation for people with complex needs, and indeed those who live with mental illness. This means there is an enhanced support mechanism always available for tenants.

The final master plan aims to address transport concerns within the village, and to and from the village. It recommends a series of improvements to traffic management for safety and amenity, and recommends a series of improvements to better connect pedestrian and cycle paths to both the Queanbeyan and ACT shared path systems. I understand that regular meetings are held on public transport between Qcity and the ACT government on the provision of route and school services to and from Oaks Estate. We heard some detail from Minister Rattenbury around those services.

In relation to improved safety measures, Oaks Estate has been identified as a location to which ACT Policing will direct additional resources aimed at detecting, disrupting and preventing antisocial and criminal behaviour. This is something that the minister for police has certainly been pursuing. I understand that a recent operation in Oaks Estate took place last month. It consisted of mobile vehicle patrols, random breath testing and traffic enforcement activities. There were 50 negative screening tests and five traffic infringement notices issued during that particular operation. ACT Policing advises that the number of offences reported in Oaks Estate for the period January 2015 to February 2015 has decreased overall by 57 per cent.

The actions that are already underway or proposed for the future regarding village amenity, urban renewal, public housing support services, transport and safety are starting to deliver some results and certainly have the potential to achieve more in the future.

Having said all of that, there is of course more work to do. This is recognised and understood across ACT government. Minister Gentleman's amendment calls for

continued work on the implementation of the Oaks Estate master plan and on issues of social disadvantage. As we have heard today, and as has been made clear by the contributions of a number of different ministers within the territory government, this requires cross-agency work. Given the imperative out of this debate, the representations and discussions I have had with the Oaks Estate Progress Association, a cross-agency working group will be established to work on implementation. That will draw together resources across the various portfolios and issues that have been raised.

I think that a single point of contact for Oaks Estate residents, rather than seeking multiple meetings over an extended period of time with different portfolios, is the quickest and most effective way to deliver the outcomes that all in the Assembly, and indeed the community, are seeking for Oaks Estate. So the message is very clear. The planning work has been done. It is time to get on with delivery in a number of different portfolios, and that will be the government's focus. We will seek to pull together the various areas of territory government to have one reference point and one process and series of meetings, with one group broadly representing all the different areas of ACT government, to work through the implementation issues and any new issues that might be brought to the ACT government's attention.

That is a more effective way to achieve the outcomes that all are desiring here. The government will coordinate itself to ensure that Oaks Estate residents, through their progress association, have one meeting with ACT government, not separate meetings with different areas of government. That will be coordinated through the Chief Minister's directorate, with input, obviously, from each of the line agencies and each of the ministers and their officers who have responsibility here. That is the way to quickly move to address the issues that have been raised and to work on the implementation of the master plan for Oaks Estate.

Having said that, I thank Mr Doszpot for raising these issues today, and Mr Gentleman for his amendment, which I encourage members to support.

**MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (3.29):** I would like to preface my statement before I speak to the amendment by expressing my profound disappointment in Mr Barr's comments, which tried to give some credence to the amendment being proposed by Mr Gentleman. I cannot agree to Mr Gentleman's amendment; I certainly cannot use any of the very praiseworthy words that Mr Barr has used.

We are used to having our government, and particularly Mr Rattenbury, try to dismantle by amendment any motion that calls on this government to take any action, but I am surprised at the number of parts to the amendment being proposed here this afternoon, given that our motion was totally based on the words and requests of the community of Oaks Estate. Mr Barr, Mr Gentleman's comments and amendment and your endorsement of Mr Gentleman's amendment do not silence the opposition in this regard. It is not us you are silencing by your sheer numbers.

**Dr Bourke:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A point of order. Standing order 42?

**Dr Bourke:** Yes.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I was about to mention that myself. Mr Doszpot, could you address the chair rather than the Chief Minister.

**MR DOSZPOT:** With pleasure. Madam Speaker, I am surprised by the number of parts to the amendment, as I mentioned before, and I am surprised by Mr Barr's endorsement of Mr Gentleman's amendment. Amendments generally are attempts to silence the opposition. Madam Speaker, that is not going to work this afternoon because it is not the opposition that is being silenced. Our original motion and the calls to action are based totally on the words of, and the consultation that we have had with, the community of Oaks Estate.

It is quite disgraceful that the Minister for Planning, who should know better—and I am surprised—has gone to the extent that he has. He either does not understand the deep issues within the community or he does not care. I will come back to that. All in all, I say: shame on you—

**Dr Bourke:** Madam Speaker—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** That is not a point of order. It is a term of address.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister Gentleman and your colleagues, and shame on Mr Rattenbury, for your treatment of this community that has continued to this day. All members on the other side have demonstrated today that you plan to continue ignoring the voice of the community of Oaks Estate. You have ignored it for 15 years.

**Dr Bourke:** Madam Speaker, a point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A point of order?

**Dr Bourke:** Yes. Mr Doszpot continues to refer to the minister as “you”. He is not complying with standing order 42. He is not addressing his remarks to the Speaker.

**MR DOSZPOT:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down, Mr Doszpot. First of all, can I remind members that when someone rises to take a point of order, the member speaking must yield and must sit down. I am sorry; I was distracted by a discussion. I did not hear, but I am assuming, Dr Bourke, that you are not just commenting on another rhetorical turn of phrase. I will remind members of standing order 42 and that they should address the chair and not refer to ministers in the second person.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Madam Speaker, can I speak on the point of order?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You may address the point of order.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Madam Speaker, I was speaking in general terms; I was not speaking to an individual minister. I said “you on the other side”. It was not to any specific individual.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It does not matter, Mr Doszpot. The standing orders say that you address the chair. That is what standing order 42 says.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am absolutely amazed by the fact that the amendment has been moved and that Mr Rattenbury and colleagues on the other side have agreed to something that really flies in the face of all of the requests that the community has been talking to them about. It is to the eternal shame of members of this government that they are persisting in such blatant ignorance of what is being said to them by the community. Minister Gentleman either does not listen to the community or simply does not understand what the community is trying to say to him. My point on this is that I guess he simply does not care and he does not understand.

While on the subject of shame, it is beneath contempt that Minister Gentleman tried to use a comparison between one of the most advantaged suburbs and one of the most disadvantaged suburbs in order to argue a point—a point that was incorrect in any event. Minister Gentleman's figures on crime statistics, broken down to a per capita basis, show that in Oaks Estate there is one offence for every 3.86 people, while in Yarralumla it is one offence for every 7.57 people. The crime profile for Oaks Estate is almost double that of Yarralumla. So what was his point, other than making a cheap shot at me? It further highlights to the Oaks Estate community that Mr Gentleman does not care about these issues. Even though I may live in Yarralumla, I certainly do. I failed to see his point, as did the representatives of Oaks Estate who are here.

Mr Rattenbury indicated that he will be supporting the amendment. He also tried to suggest that there is a bright future for Oaks Estate. My retort at the time to Mr Rattenbury was, and I repeat it now, that by their actions here today they have indicated that there is no bright future for the Oaks Estate community while this government are in power. They have had 15 years to fix these problems and still today they have failed to even understand what the problems are, let alone be prepared to take action. They have crossed out every single item that relates to any action, and they have failed to appreciate the depth of concern, the weariness of the residents and the fact that they have been continually overlooked and not listened to.

I will now turn to my summing up. Those remarks were in relation to the amendment.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You are going to close now?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am going to close now.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We need to deal with the amendment first.

Question put:

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

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Ms Berry  
Dr Bourke  
Ms Burch  
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris  
Mr Gentleman  
Ms Porter  
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe  
Mr Doszpot  
Mrs Dunne  
Mr Hanson

Ms Lawder  
Mr Smyth  
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

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

**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) (3.42), by leave: I wish to add some information on ACTION services which I did not have in time for this morning's debate. I will keep it brief, in the spirit of being granted additional leave. This morning I spoke about ACTION fares. Mr Doszpot cited a number of letters that I had written in the previous term about ACTION matters on behalf of Oaks Estate and I did want to provide an update on information.

I spoke this morning about the flexible bus service that was made available to Oaks Estate residents in order to provide additional services and I can inform the Assembly that this is made available to Oaks Estate residents at ACTION cost. So that is a service that is supported by the ACT government that has come about since I wrote those letters during the last term.

Another key matter cited in the letters that I wrote on behalf of Oaks Estate residents was the disparity of fares. It was a very significant fare, I believe up to \$14, for somebody to come from Oaks Estate into the ACT, but now any resident of Oaks Estate can buy a low cost, one-way ticket to Woden or Civic from Queanbeyan, travel via Qcity Transit and then transfer to an ACTION bus if necessary all on the one ticket. This is the Oaks Estate special one-way cash fare and is the result of an arrangement made between the ACT government and Qcity Transit.

This fare is only available to people of Oaks Estate. I note that it is a \$2.50 cash fare, which is cheaper than the ACTION cash fare at \$4.50 and even cheaper still if one uses a MyWay card on an ACTION bus. In light of those issues that Mr Doszpot noted that I had raised in my letter, there has been action on both of those points and that has certainly improved the situation for residents of Oaks Estate.

**MR DOSZPOT** (Molonglo) (3.44): Words cannot reflect accurately my anger and absolute disdain at what this government and its Greens sycophant supporter continue to do in this place. Once again the government scribes furiously rewrote another opposition motion to make sure they on the government benches do not actually commit to anything, do not stand for anything, do not have to do anything and make sure no words of criticism pass their eyes.

Mr Gentleman could not help himself. He even had to delete one of the noting items that we had, point (d):

... that despite all these attempts at community engagement and government interest, Oaks Estate was described in the 2006 census as one of two most disadvantaged suburbs in Canberra ...

That is not a political statement. It is not something we have dreamt up that we should put in there. It is a factual statement that comes out of a census report. But even that is



something this minister cannot contemplate and has amended the hell out of. We cannot have words of criticism pass the eyes of the Minister for Planning and the other ministers whose responsibilities relate to Oaks Estate. But the game is up. You can fool some of the people some of the time but you cannot do it forever and, members of this government, the electorate is telling us that they are over your meaningless rhetoric and your do-nothing approach to issue resolution.

This government has a single focus at the minute—light rail—and anything else can be damned. As we have seen yet again today, the government have amended our motion to remove anything suggesting action and comment. They do not accept that Oaks Estate is neglected. They do not accept there is serious social disadvantage. Mr Barr talked about cutting the grass and did everything but address the issues that the community brought up with him and with Mr Gentleman just two days ago. Mr Gentleman has a very short memory or attention span, or he just does not care or does not understand what the community told him two days ago.

They do not accept that footpaths are needed. They do not accept that lighting is needed and that increased police patrols would be useful, and they have clearly no intention of providing the sort of bus service that the community is asking for. Perhaps Oaks Estate residents should start lobbying for extensions of light rail. The economic case for it is about as robust as it is for Gungahlin, and that at least will get the government's attention.

Let there be no mistake, the government's amendment clearly says, "We plan to do as we have always done, and that is nothing. We will hide behind a planning process because that will absolutely ensure that we do nothing. We have done nothing for 15 years. Why should we change now?" The Oaks Estate association should be sceptical as to how much the planning minister listened to them the other day. Clearly if he did listen he has no intention of responding to their concerns. He has his marching orders, just like Mr Rattenbury has, and neither of them dares stray from the script provided for them.

I thank my colleagues on this side of the chamber for their words in support of this motion and their support for the residents of Oaks Estate. I want to thank those from the Oaks Estate community and other members of the community here for showing their support for Oaks Estate and seeing firsthand what happens when ministers have to defend their do-nothing approach.

Oaks Estate has, for far too long, had a bad rap. People living there want and deserve better, but we know that this government will not deliver that reform. It is unlikely that this government will do any more than offer another review or drag out the current one until after the next election. As I said, even the planning minister who met with the residents association the other day offered nothing, probably noted little and plans to do no more than his predecessors.

Minister Rattenbury continues to disappoint but not surprise. I am sure those on this side of the chamber could write any speech for him because it always starts out with some version of "I feel your pain" but manages to swing around to always supporting the government and sticking with the government line. I would like to know which of

the “calls on the government” parts of our motion have so conflicted Mr Rattenbury. Was it “(a) address the residents’ immediate concerns, particularly in respect of public housing”? I wonder if that was a part that really offended Minister Rattenbury. Or was it “(b) work more closely with the Oaks Estate Progress Association to address their concerns about increased rates of crime including providing a more visible police presence”? Or was it “(c) deliver amenity improvements such as safe footpaths, safer intersections, better street lighting and hazard reduction”? Or was it “(d) consider providing an ACTION bus route schedule to ensure, at a minimum, an efficient and affordable direct route for schoolchildren to schools and commuters to work”? The questions remain and I would love to hear Mr Rattenbury’s answer to those questions.

Mr Rattenbury spoke in this chamber only this morning about the rising levels of violence in the community and said we must do something to address it. Oaks Estate residents have identified rising levels of crime in their area, but Minister Rattenbury has just decided against doing anything about it, and that is pretty close to hypocrisy. In the interim, Minister Rattenbury, you have to stand for something—through you, Madam Deputy Speaker—and please let it be more than fertility trials for kangaroos.

I reiterate: I am more than disappointed but not surprised by the government’s inaction. But it is not me, it is not the Canberra Liberals, you have to answer to for your inaction; it is the residents of Canberra. And they will judge you harshly for your abundance of rhetoric and your absence of action.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Community services—social inclusion**

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (3.51): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Canberra is an inclusive city with diverse social cultures and communities;
- (b) that successive Labor governments have invested in quality infrastructure and services which have been central to shaping our inclusive culture;
- (c) that any Canberran might need help to be better able to participate in our community at some point in their life; and
- (d) that every Canberran can help in building inclusive communities;

(2) further notes the Government’s commitment to social inclusion through:

- (a) investment in inclusive infrastructure including quality social housing and public transport;
- (b) services that support Canberrans to live better lives, including;

- (i) the Better Services Blueprint and the One Human Services Gateway;
  - (ii) high quality hospitals and community health services; and
  - (iii) nation leading public education and training programs;
- (c) support for organisations that help Canberrans connect with their communities through life-long learning, arts and sport;
  - (d) commitment to the National Disability Insurance Scheme which provides the choice and control needed for people with disabilities to better participate in the life of our community; and
  - (e) support for diversity in our community through events and programs that help Canberrans celebrate their communities and cultures; and
- (3) calls on the Minister Assisting the Chief Minister for Social Inclusion to deliver a progress statement on the Government's Social Inclusion agenda no later than the second sitting week in May.

I would like to speak to the important issue of social inclusion and how it relates to Canberra as a city of diverse social cultures and communities. From the outset I want to be clear that this Labor government is committed to ensuring that social inclusion and equality continue to be at the heart of our policies, programs and services. This city that we call home is an inclusive city. It is absolutely true that we have diverse social cultures and diverse communities. We can see this every day as we move about our city.

However, we cannot have any conversation about culture without acknowledging that Canberra is home to people who belong to one of the oldest living cultures in the world. Recognising the links that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had and continue to have to land is an essential part of understanding how culture is a dynamic and living element that shapes us all.

We can talk about how diverse our social culture and our communities are in different ways. The most obvious way is to look at how Canberra has been shaped by the contributions of people who have come from around the world to make our city home. I include here builders and tradesmen, thinkers and doers who were instrumental in bringing Canberra to life. The breadth and vibrancy of our cultural diversity is expressed in the life of our city and most especially through the music, food, dance, art and more that is on show during the National Multicultural Festival.

We can talk about how our city welcomes people whether they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex or queer. We know that these groups have their own social cultures that are part of the wider community. We also recognise the diversity of our community in the hundreds of community groups that offer a chance for us all to find a place, to see ourselves reflected back—the same but different.

Many Canberrans might consider the original Griffin Centre as the place where the community, in all its diversity, became something real and open to all. In some ways,

Canberra's social and cultural journey could be traced through a rollcall of the groups who made the centre home. It was participation on a grand scale, mostly for no or low cost. There truly was something for everyone. It was a place where people made connections, learnt new things, shared their talents and felt welcomed. Here was a place that allowed space for an inclusive, connected community to grow.

Today, the new Griffin Centre, across the road from where things began, continues to reflect the diversity of our community through its tenants, who provide support and connection. Other similar hubs now exist throughout the city. So whatever your idea of community means, there is an essential ingredient, and that is the concept of inclusion.

I would like to talk about that concept and the way this government sees how it works for our citizens. An inclusive Canberra allows everyone the freedom to participate and belong in the communities they choose, where all people can reach their potential, make contributions and share in the benefits of an inclusive community.

We want Canberra to be a place where everyone has access to the resources, opportunities and capabilities to learn, to participate in education and training, to work, to participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work, including family and carer responsibilities, to engage, to connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities and to have a voice, to be able to influence decisions that affect them. We are already doing many things well to realise the elements that will bring inclusion for all. However, we know, as each of you would also know, that not everyone in our great city is truly included. There are Canberrans who are pushed to the edges, who are excluded.

I would like to talk now about the key elements that will achieve inclusion and equality. Most of us would agree that having a good start to life is essential to having what is needed to be our best. For most, this means having good health, education, employment, housing and transport. Real inclusion is also about a person feeling part of the community, especially when things go wrong.

The ACT recognised many years ago that parents need support to give their child the best start they can. Part of this is recognising that parenting is not always intuitive and that it is okay to learn about being a parent and what is needed for a child's development. The ACT's three child and family centres have been hugely successful in providing a welcoming space where children and their families can drop in to get information and support from professionals.

We now know a lot more about what giving a child a good start means through the ACT's participation in the Australian early development index. This initiative collects data across Australia to measure key domains of a child's life to give us an idea of how our children are developing, where extra support is needed and when it is needed. This work has informed, and continues to inform, the development and delivery of programs and supports for vulnerable children and families.

Education has a fundamental role in building an individual's capacity to overcome barriers so that they are included in the world and can take up opportunities. Education is not only about setting a person on a path for achievement and future

employment. If we are doing this well, education should also be about encouraging lifelong learning.

This government recognises that every student has a right to receive the best possible education, inclusive of their ability, behaviour, background or the challenges which they face. This is why we have a focus on culture and identity in our schools. Our schools provide students with access to learning programs that provide an opportunity to use their unique talents and abilities and that recognise individual learning styles and different needs. Families can be confident that their children and young people are learning in a culturally safe and inclusive environment.

We also know that having a roof over our head is critical to increasing a person's chances to participate at every level in a community. This is why this government has made unprecedented investment since 2001 to assist Canberrans who are doing it tough. I include here significant reform of public housing and homelessness services where we have refocused efforts to revitalise our ageing housing stock and to support people to maintain their tenancies. We have collaborated with the housing and homelessness sector so that innovation and new thinking in policy and practice are being realised. The common ground supportive housing project that is now operating is just one example.

We would all agree that feeling healthy, mentally and physically, significantly increases the ability of people to learn, work, engage and to have a voice. I am sure that my colleague Minister Corbell will talk more about what this government is doing to ensure that Canberrans have access to quality health care. I would, however, like to reflect on my previous career and mention oral health.

I think we all know that good oral health is absolutely integral to a person's overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. This has actually been quantified in the recorded increase in risk of cardiovascular disease for people with unhealthy gums. A healthy mouth means that people can chew, eat their food, speak, smile and socialise without pain or embarrassment.

The ACT government places great importance on this by ensuring that the dental health program has memorandums of understanding with external agencies to prioritise patients who have high clinical needs, financial difficulties, who are experiencing mental health issues or homelessness, or who are undergoing drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Transport disadvantage can affect the ability of people to engage with their community. It is a key factor in social and economic isolation and we must ensure that public transport services reach those with the highest social needs. The ACT accessible public transport action plan is continuing to be implemented.

The government is also acting on these issues with the establishment of the community transport coordination centre. This centre provides one point of contact to access information on transport options and to book bus travel. Early reports on the operations of the community transport coordination centre are positive, with improvements in community transport coordination being achieved to ensure that the Canberra community have appropriate transport access.

Other members will no doubt discuss the role of the NDIS and social enterprises in helping social inclusiveness. I am proud of the fact that our capital, our Canberra, is a safe and harmonious community. I mentioned earlier our much-loved National Multicultural Festival. Not only is this a fantastic event, but it is a chance for members of our diverse cultural communities to share with everyone the things that make their cultures unique. We can see that we are living together in harmony with 250,000 people or more regularly attending our National Multicultural Festival, enjoying themselves and having fun. This is one of the things that make us such a great multicultural community.

I know that community leaders are working with government to make sure that young people especially are engaged in activities that build connection and belonging. Festivals, the arts and events celebrate our community's cultural diversity. As always, our theatres deliver a quality program of works that seek to challenge, delight and intrigue us. We have an outstanding calendar of festivals and events in Canberra that advance the city's continued evolution and its reputation as a great place to live, work, visit, learn and invest. These are things that bring economic benefits but that also help to build a strong sense of community pride and form our identity as a capital and as a community.

Over the last six months we have had a great Floriade, and successful Asian Cup and Cricket World Cup matches. This is on top of a packed calendar of annual Canberra Day events, including Enlighten. These events galvanise the city and celebrate our cultural diversity and collective spirit. They also prove that the ACT can deliver world-class events. I want to make special mention of Enlighten, now in its fifth year. I know that at its inception some members of the opposition did not think much of Enlighten. But anybody who went out to Enlighten the other night and saw the thousands of Canberrans enjoying themselves would know that they are in a very small minority.

**Mr Coe:** I was at the Canberra Show.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr Coe, for that information.

**Mr Coe:** I had to get to the show.

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Mr Coe! Stop the clock, please. Mr Coe, you will have an opportunity, I am sure, to talk to this motion, if you wish. In the meantime, I would like you to remain silent. Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure Mr Coe did enjoy the show, but I am talking about Enlighten. The inclusion of the Enlighten night noodle markets for the first time led to a huge boost in crowd numbers and further complemented the successful cultural and entertainment program that has become synonymous with Enlighten in recent years. I am sorry that Mr Coe was not there to enjoy the night noodle markets.

Most of us would agree that a society is measured by the way it responds to those who are most in need. That is why we must continue to focus on addressing disadvantage through effective programs and support. It also means that individually and collectively we have a role in helping to make Canberra a more inclusive place through our attitudes as much as our actions. Through genuine conversations, partnerships and commitments with individuals, communities and business, this government, this ACT Labor government, is using the principles of social inclusion and equality to build relationships founded on mutual respect. With this respect, we are leading a collaborative approach to social inclusion through engaging with and developing inclusive communities.

We do not always know when something will go wrong in our lives. But we should know that there is a community we can ask for help. Canberrans are a generous lot and collectively our community is strong and resilient. Most people are willing to lend a hand when it is needed. So I believe that as a community we have a reasonable expectation that any of us can get support when it is needed. This government is in the business of ensuring that each person can truly be included in our great city.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.05): I would like to take this opportunity to speak in response to Dr Bourke's motion on social inclusion. I will say at the outset that social inclusion is integral to an accessible, inclusive and functioning society. I welcome any new or continuing initiatives from the ACT government that will make Canberra a more socially inclusive community. I thank you, Dr Bourke, for bringing this motion today.

From what I have read, government policies on social inclusion appear to have originated in France in the 1970s. It was actually the term "social exclusion" that was first used in France. At the outset it was used to describe people who were excluded from the social insurance system. This included people living with a disability and the unemployed, who did not have insurance.

Subsequently, the term "social exclusion" was extended to describe disaffected youth and the isolated in French society. This came about as a result of social unrest in large public housing estates on the outskirts of several French cities. Following that, it was used to emphasise the marginalisation of the unemployed in French society.

Social inclusion then became a mainstream concern of the UK government. In 1997 the Blair government established a social exclusion unit that reported directly to cabinet. The role of this unit was to coordinate the UK government's efforts at enhancing social inclusion in the UK. In 1997 UK Prime Minister Blair described social exclusion as a label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.

In 2007 the Rudd government seized upon the UK example and established the position of Minister for Social Inclusion, which formed part of the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio. The Rudd government said:

... to be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity to:

- secure a job;
- access services;
- connect with others in life through family, friends, work, personal interests and local community;
- deal with personal crisis such as ill health, bereavement or the loss of a job; and
- have their voice heard.

The terminology “social inclusion” has been part of our vocabulary ever since. Apparently, it is expanding more and more every day. For example, today we have used it to talk about everything including cricket matches, soccer and Enlighten. Previously we talked mostly in terms of social disadvantage and vulnerable people, but now we use the terminology “social inclusion”.

What does social inclusion mean for everyday Canberrans? It can mean having the opportunity to work. This can include having access to a reliable, accessible and frequent public transport system that, for example, caters for people with disabilities. It can mean having a safe, secure home to call your own that is affordable and with security of tenure. It can mean having the opportunity to access services in our city—for example, health care and community services that may include examination tables that are adjustable for people with disabilities. It can mean having a carer available to help shower and dress you so you can get to work. It can mean having Auslan classes available at CIT. It can mean having communication access, such as Auslan interpreters, captions or braille. It can mean being welcoming, being tolerant and embracing people of any culture, religion, age, socioeconomic status, ability or almost anything else. These are just a few examples of what social inclusion can mean in our city.

At this point I would like to take the opportunity to mention Social Inclusion Week, which takes place from 21 to 29 November this year. The Social Inclusion Week Australia website says:

Social Inclusion Week is about encouraging communities to reconnect and be inclusive of all cultures, age groups, nationalities and the disadvantaged.

Social Inclusion Week aims to help Australians feel valued and to give people the opportunity to participate fully in society. It’s about connecting with local communities, work mates, family and friends to build relationships and networks, addressing isolation and exclusion by supporting people who may be unable help themselves.

I note that Dr Bourke has called on the minister to deliver a progress statement on the government’s social inclusion agenda. In looking at Dr Bourke’s motion today, I searched for the ACT government’s social inclusion agenda but could not actually



find anything called the social inclusion agenda, so I am not quite sure what a progress report on it is going to include and what it is going to cover other than to perhaps provide an opportunity for the minister to repeat the points in Dr Bourke's motion.

We do not especially need this particular motion. As the relevant minister, Ms Berry could deliver a statement on this. I am not quite sure why she needs Dr Bourke to call on her to deliver such a statement. Perhaps, firstly, it is just an opportunity to repeat the same points in the progress statement as are contained in this motion today. Or perhaps, secondly, it is a motion to fill in the time today because the ACT government is out of ideas.

Having said that, everyday Canberrans want to see action. We do not need more work or progress statements from the government; we want disability services, health services, transport, housing and community services, education, jobs, and communication that is inclusive—indeed, every aspect of our social, economic and political life.

We are happy to support the motion today and have a progress statement. In that progress statement, I look forward to hearing Ms Berry talk about access to Auslan interpreters in Canberra and how she is going to ensure the delivery of Auslan certificate II and certificate III at CIT into the future. That would be real progress in social inclusion for people who are deaf.

I look forward to seeing the ACT government take action to make Canberra a more socially inclusive city. It would be one step closer to the government rising to the challenge. We are happy to support the motion today.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (4.12.): I welcome Dr Bourke's motion today on the importance of social inclusion and equality, and reaffirm this government's commitment to ensure that all Canberra residents are able to fully connect with their community.

As Chief Minister, one of my priorities is to ensure that Canberra remains an inclusive and egalitarian city. We are a vibrant, multicultural, cohesive and supportive place to live. Canberra is a great place to grow up, to work, to socialise and to raise a family. Canberra is a city that must support all of its citizens regardless of gender, age, the country of their birth, the colour of their skin, their sexuality, whether or not they are in full health and physically able, who they share their household and their life with, or where they live. I want to keep it that way, and I want to make sure that all Canberrans understand that they are valued and supported members of our community.

To help in this objective, I have appointed Minister Berry as the Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality. This is in addition to Minister Berry's other important and complementary ministerial responsibilities in housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, community services, multicultural affairs and women. I know that Ms Berry is hard at work engaging with community groups and listening to people's views, experiences and concerns.

It is vital that the government also recognises work undertaken by our passionate, experienced and committed community sector to improve the lives of those in Canberra who are doing it tough. This is especially critical as we face the toughest external economic environment this city has faced for decades. For example, losing your job can not only have a sudden and profound effect on your feelings of self-worth and your capacity to get involved in community activity but also have consequential impacts upon the rest of your family household.

I am passionate about maintaining and improving equality within our community. We need to work hard to ensure that middle and low income Canberrans are not locked out of the labour market and not locked out of the housing market. Appropriate modern public housing and appropriate modern community housing are a practical measure of dignity, respect and opportunities for inclusion that is shared with residents. It must form an integral part of our community and is not something to be marginalised or ignored.

Earlier this year I announced the latest development of the ACT government's renewal of public housing with the replacement of the Owen flats in Lyneham. This is part of a much broader renewal of public housing that will see more than a thousand modern homes built to replace ageing multi-unit developments, including several along the Northbourne corridor. Our investment in urban renewal presents an opportunity to carefully drive the transformation of the gateway of the national capital in creating a greater level of social inclusion while boosting economic opportunities.

Assisting those who have mental health issues is another indicator of a city that supports all of its citizens to reach their potential. The government has passed new laws to empower people with mental illnesses and their carers to have a direct say in their treatment plans. We believe that mental health patients should be afforded the same opportunity to have a view about their treatment plan as any other patient, if they have the capacity to do so. I am glad that these laws now enshrine these rights in legislation.

The government has introduced forensic mental health orders which provide increased oversight of treatment for some people with mental illness or mental disorders who are involved in the justice system. These measures will help ensure equal access to treatment for this often highly stigmatised group.

These changes conform to advances in human rights, including the ACT's Human Rights Act and the UN convention on the rights of people with a disability. They place the ACT in the front rank of change to mental health law.

The ACT government's ongoing program to improve mental health services to the people of Canberra will continue, including seeking ways to reduce the stigma of mental health for those who are affected in our community.

Our city has long welcomed members of our LGBTI communities. We keep taking practical steps to ensure that there is no unintended discrimination or diminution of their contribution in society. For example, last year we secured changes to the births,

deaths and marriages act, and made changes to our births, deaths and marriages arrangements to allow for a third category, “indeterminate, intersex or unspecified”, for birth certificates, and removed the requirement for sexual reassignment surgery for people who want to change their gender on their birth certificate. Previously, every single time a person sought to open a bank account or did something that required the presentation of an ID it was an intrusive and complex process. These changes were a necessary evolution of the law and administration to reflect changing social expectations and the acknowledgement of people who do not see themselves in the context of binary sex or gender. I am delighted that these changes, unlike some of our other progressive social reforms, were passed unanimously by members of this Assembly.

Let me add at this point that the government I lead will continue to advocate for greater equality for LGBTI Canberrans. We will continue to be passionate advocates for same-sex marriage. We know that commonwealth legislative action is needed. I, along with tens of thousands—now hundreds of thousands—of Canberrans, look forward to the day when this occurs and when discrimination against same-sex couples ends. We know, and we know clearly, that federal MPs and senators continue to lag behind this community, and indeed the Australian community, on this issue.

We cannot rest on our laurels. In discussing what being the most LGBTI-friendly city in Australia would mean practically for people, I posed this question. Someone provided in a single sentence perhaps the most compelling answer and challenge that we face. This individual told me that not once in his life had he been able to un-self-consciously hold the hand of his partner in public in this city—not once in his life. I would invite every member who has an opposite-sex partner to think about that for a moment. What if, on every single occasion in your life, you felt self-conscious, at risk or threatened by holding the hand of your partner in public? That tells you that we have a way to go on social inclusion and equality in this city.

You cannot legislate for that; I recognise that. But as leaders in this place, and as the Chief Minister, with the minister for social inclusion and equality, we are going to move this debate forward and make this a better city for LGBTI Canberrans.

We cannot rest on our laurels. There is much more to do. That is why I have established a cabinet subcommittee on social inclusion to progress the government’s agenda. This dedicated subcommittee will be a forum to enhance ideas and exchanges between ministers and senior key officials, provide more accountability on priority projects, and allow direct ministerial input at the early stage of the policy development cycle.

This structural commitment to social inclusion will build on the record of the government to date in areas of mental health reform, transgender law reform, promotion of same-sex marriage, civil unions and civil partnerships, and the more than 100 pieces of ACT legislation that have been amended to remove discrimination, to help integrate some of Canberra’s most disadvantaged into service provision and more sustainable tenancies. There are many areas of focus. There is the NDIS, strengthening families and work across multiple portfolios that will be brought to this social inclusion subcommittee.

I have touched on only a few of the diverse array of areas that will constitute the government's social inclusion agenda. We will continue to engage with the community and undertake the reforms necessary to ensure that our city is an open and welcoming place for all of our citizens. It is a key priority of the government I lead, and I thank Dr Bourke for raising this important matter this afternoon.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (4.23): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this important motion. Social justice, social inclusion and equality are the very foundations on which the Labor Party was founded. We are the party that believes in equality of access to services and equality of opportunity. On this side of politics we believe in levelling the playing field to overcome the disparities in our community that have been caused by unequal access to resources and by attitudes. The Labor Party believes in enabling citizens to participate fully in the life of society in all its aspects and in fostering a healthy democracy through that participation. These are principles that have guided this great Labor Party over the years, and they have enabled this government to transform Canberra into the great place it is today.

As we all know from the Property Council report in March 2014 and the OECD regional wellbeing ranking report in September 2014, Canberra was named as the most livable city in Australia. I have said previously these rankings have not been achieved by chance but, rather, by successive Labor governments' recognition that to achieve societal progress there is a real need to continue to invest in the wellbeing of people and households. It is through such recognition and partnerships that Canberrans are enjoying great opportunity and accessing appropriately targeted services, as well as participating in both the social and economic life of this city.

A great example of how this government is achieving this is through programs such as the better services blueprint and the one human services gateway, which we launched last year in west Belconnen. As I stated in my speech to this Assembly last month, these initiatives are the result of the close partnership of this government with the community sector, a partnership that recognises that it is through working together that positive outcomes can be achieved for the community.

The aim of the blueprint is to guide the delivery of human services across government and the community sector that are more client-driven, more holistic, more responsive to the dynamic, changing needs of the community and more inclusive. This initiative has already seen families working with trained workers to come up with tailored solutions for specific families because, as we know, one size does not fit all.

We are experiencing a time of considerable challenge, mainly as a result of the federal Liberal government's needless and ill-thought-out austerity measures, cutting federally funded programs with devastating effects. In recognition of this, the government is committed to continuing to work closely with the community sector and business to ensure that the Canberra community remains strong, healthy and resilient.

For over 30 years after relocating to Canberra from the remote parts of the Northern Territory, where I worked as a registered nurse in Indigenous communities, I worked

in the community sector, regularly identifying areas of need in relation to service delivery and where I could help establish organisations that would in some way meet those needs and provide those services. One such organisation is the West Belconnen Health Co-op, which started its life in Charnwood. This health co-op has been a very successful health provider in west Belconnen. As we all know, in a very short period of time it has grown rapidly and now operates in an additional four other locations in the ACT as well as providing services through another five locations at aged-care facilities. Those locations include Charnwood, Belconnen, Kippax, Evatt and Chisholm, with clinics also being conducted at Kangara Waters, Ginninderra Gardens, Villagio Sant' Antonio, Kalparrin and BUPA Aranda aged-care facilities.

Due to its inclusive nature and its unique model where co-op members own the business, this organisation has grown rapidly to have over 28,000 members and is now operating as the National Health Co-op Ltd. This has obviously increased access to health services for all Canberrans by attracting additional general practitioners to the ACT and also by offering allied health services and co-location of complementary support services. This is another fantastic example of what can be achieved when the government works with community and with the business and community sectors.

The nurse-led walk-in clinics in Belconnen and Tuggeranong are other examples of services embedded in the community that have enhanced and increased access to health services in the ACT. These two free and non-appointment-based initiatives have helped bring health services closer to where people live and work, at accessible hours that suit users of those services. In the period between their opening in June and September 2014, there were more than 9,300 presentations in both centres, showing that Canberrans continue to embrace the new locations. I believe these figures will only grow with time.

Madam Assistant Speaker, as you know, on Monday this week I proudly joined the Minister for Health, Mr Simon Corbell, and my fellow Ginninderra colleague Dr Chris Bourke at the launching of the design plans for the proposed University of Canberra public hospital, which are now out for community comment. The UCPH is a very important health investment in the ACT, providing important access to subacute services, stimulating economic activity, creating further education opportunities in the form of research, as well as attracting more students and academics into our world-class education institutions such as the University of Canberra and the Bruce CIT campus. Importantly, it also frees up acute beds in the Canberra Hospital and at Calvary. We heard the minister talk yesterday about the way the university sector and the government have come together to plan a health facility which will meet the growing needs for subacute care as our population ages and a facility which is welcoming in its design.

Social inclusion also encompasses areas such as recreation, as Dr Bourke mentioned. This government has continued to invest in ensuring that Canberrans have access to adequate, well-equipped recreation facilities as well as sporting events and festivals. I will talk about two such organisations providing valuable opportunities to Canberrans. The first is Canberra United in the Westfield W-League—great champions of women's football—ably led by Heather Reid AM, the CEO of Capital Football. This is a club I and I am sure many in the ACT are proud to support as they have proven

time and again that not only are they a great source of entertainment and excitement for their fans and Canberrans in general but they also offer a great role model to schoolchildren with the school visits they offer on request to pass on the benefits of healthy lifestyles and physical activity to the next generation of Australian footballers. I try not to miss any of Canberra United's home games.

Finally, art is part of a socially inclusive society, and Belconnen Arts Centre is an institution very close to my heart. I have seen this centre grow from an identified need by a few members of the Belconnen community to the thriving centre it is now. Since its opening in 2009 the Belconnen Arts Centre has become an icon on the shores of Lake Ginninderra. The centre has continued to play a key role in the development of, and opportunities given to, upcoming Canberran artists. The broader Belconnen and north-west Canberra communities are also gaining from the centre's many programs and accessible services. That is why I welcome the continued support of the arts centre by this government and I look forward to the eventual completion of this important community cultural infrastructure project through the second stage development. This will further enhance its community facilities through the additional performance space as well as enhancing the foreshore of the lake.

We are fortunate to have a very strong and diverse arts community in Canberra and the region. As patron of the CAT awards, I am able to witness firsthand what the arts community contributes to the city and its region by providing a place where many talented young people have gained their first step towards a professional career in live theatre, many of whom would have never been able to fulfil their dreams without the confidence and encouragement of a CAT award, which often gives them the impetus to continue.

In closing, I reflect on what the Chief Minister has just talked about—the fact that we have a way to go and that many in this community still do not feel they are included. They feel uncomfortable and that they cannot reach their full potential in their relationships in particular. I include in that our Indigenous population. I have had experience where people have told me they enter a facility and ask for a service and have to wait for that service because they happen to have different-coloured skin. Many of our refugees that come here from different countries may experience this as well.

**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) (4.33): I am happy to speak today in my role as Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality. I thank my colleague Dr Chris Bourke for his words outlining this government's platform that we are building on to make sure social inclusion and equality are at the heart of our policies.

Today I want to expand on our vision and talk about the roles inclusion and equality have in helping people feel connected in our cities and many communities. It is clear what a socially inclusive community is. It is a community where all people feel valued, where their differences are respected and where they experience equality. The responsibility for making this vision a reality rests with both government and the

community. Government certainly has a role through its policies and resources but, at the end of the day, it is a community that creates belonging. My colleague Dr Bourke has explored the definitions of social inclusion and equality as well as its opposite—exclusion, where people are left out or pushed out of the life of the community. I want to go a further step and explore what inclusion and equality mean in daily life.

Every day we see, hear or read about people who are being left out of the life of our city. The Chief Minister talked about his own experiences earlier with the story he shared about a person he knew. I will touch on this again a bit later. These are people who are our families, friends, neighbours and work colleagues. They are people who, because of who they are or what they are experiencing in their lives, are made to feel like they are causing an inconvenience just by being around.

At its worst, exclusion is the deep-seated feeling that if we stop showing up it would go unnoticed. It is a difficult thing to tackle, but I think it is something we have all felt at some point in our lives. A good example is a CALD parent at a school P&C meeting who feels excluded every time they have to ask other parents to slow down in a conversation. From a government perspective, we can offer support to that parent to improve their English and we can put emphasis on the diversity of parent participation in our schools. We can make sure they have transport to attend the meeting, but we also need to work with the community to talk about how can support CALD parents to participate in their community. That is a small example of inclusion, but even this small example demonstrates that across our community and across all portfolios of government we need to work together to address the complex barriers that stop Canberrans being included in the life of our community.

Obviously government has an important role in shaping equality of outcomes in our community. We must put in place policies and resources that give us the framework for affordable housing, transport, health and education, safe and accessible public spaces and places. One of the most important ways government can support inclusion is to make sure small problems we all experience do not escalate to become long-term exclusion. While most people can handle one setback in life, a rolling series of setbacks can undermine anyone's confidence, financial security and ability to cope. Government cannot intervene to stop the ups and downs of life, but with the right supports we can help stop those bumps that happen in all our lives becoming long-term problems.

This is what is happening under the human services blueprint. We are building a human services system that responds to a person as a whole and provides the right kind of service at the right time for the time it is needed. I am sure people in the Assembly are familiar with the initiatives under the better services umbrella; the one human services gateway, a single access point for services and supports; the strengthening families program that supports families who have complex needs and who are involved with many services; and the local services network at west Belconnen that is a model for local service delivery. The gateway is a truly human service where people work hard to make sure that others doing it tough in our community are linked up and supported to access the services they need to build the kind of security that lets them think about building community support and gives them the opportunity to contribute to their communities.

I want to mention my experiences with the local services network in west Belconnen. The idea behind a local services network is where place-based services are built around the needs and wishes of a local community. It is about starting with the complexity of individual lives and reaching out through local residents, services that are already operating in the area and businesses to create a strong network. One of the benefits of this work is that it also brings opportunities to highlight the strength of the community to build on the sense of pride and belonging that exists in so many Canberra suburbs.

There are things the government cannot do alone. With respect to comments made on this motion about me as the minister assisting the Chief Minister on social inclusion and support producing a progress statement on this, that is simple. But social inclusion and equality are not resolved just by making a statement; if only it were that simple. I am certain women who fought for equal rights in the 70s thought they had won. Sadly, that is not the case and gender equality continues to be an issue. I applaud the women who fought then and continue to fight now for gender equality. I am proud to fight with them. Mr Barr shared his story of how same-sex couples feel about whether they can hold their partner's hand in public and whether they will ever have the chance to marry the person they love.

Yes, it is important to report back to the Assembly because the conversation on inclusion and equality is not over with an announcement. It needs a better understanding of action from all of us. We need to create a welcoming community, not just welcoming services. You need to know you are accepted for yourself and your skills, that you can contribute, whether it is at your school, your sports club or at work. These are the outcomes of a community culture where people feel they really belong somewhere—the knowledge that if they stop showing up at school or at work or down at the shops on a Sunday they would be missed.

This is not easy to create; it requires leadership from government but it also requires Canberrans to go the step beyond just tolerating others. It is the small efforts we see every day. It is community groups who book accessible meeting rooms, sports clubs that work hard to be accessible and welcoming to all players, and it is definitely parents who slow down at P&C meetings without being asked. It is people thinking beyond their own experience, and it sets new standards for our whole community.

Members, what we are talking about here are not new concepts. For the past 14 years the government has been developing policies and agendas that have been based around social justice or that build social capital. We are reframing how we want inclusion and equality to be evident in our capital. We are saying clearly that it is not enough just to provide a good service; we need to support people who need it to access government services and actively shape the kind of community that creates supports on its own.

Inclusion and equality are not abstract concepts. As all members in this place have acknowledged, they have concrete impacts in the lives of Canberrans, and I am pleased to continue the work of this government with a renewed focus on how we include every single member of our community in the fantastic life of this city.



**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) (4.41): A community that is socially inclusive is an important aspiration for any government. Social inclusion is about people's ability to participate in their community, in their society. It is about ensuring that people are not disadvantaged or discriminated against in their daily lives. The Australian Social Inclusion Board defines "social inclusion" as having the resources, opportunities and capabilities to learn, work, engage and have a voice.

Social inclusion is about ensuring the full participation of our citizens and equal opportunities. People in the ACT need to be able to access work, to be able to participate within their community, to be able to connect with family and friends and to be able to be heard. It is about helping people to be the best they can be in their daily lives and ensuring that people are not excluded. Social inclusion is, in many regards, a fundamental underpinning of social justice.

People can be excluded because of their gender, their socioeconomic status, their cultural and family backgrounds and their disabilities. And the exclusion can affect people's access to education, health, social services, community and employment.

The notion of social inclusion must underpin everything that a government seeks to do. Every policy and service should have social inclusion at its heart, as an inclusive society is a healthy society, and a society that does not leave people behind.

The ACT is by many measures an inclusive society. Over a significant period of time the ACT government at a formal level has established a framework for building social inclusion through the 2004 Canberra social plan and the 2011 Canberra social plan. The 2004 initiative also drove forward the ACT's 2004 human rights legislation, the first of its kind in Australia.

I touch on those formal government documents because, as government policy develops, that is where the explicit acknowledgement of the idea comes from. As I will talk about later in my speech, I think social inclusion is a much broader notion than simply a government policy like that, and I wanted to put that in context here.

The one human services gateway, rolled out from July last year, and which seeks to establish a single gateway for a range of human services in the ACT, is an example of where government can play a specific and formal role in that regard. A service like that is designed to make it easier for people to access services and therefore enhance their participation in society. Services such as children, youth and family support services, the NDIA and Housing ACT were in the first tranche of services that were included there, and we can see that they are all very important social services.

There is no doubt, however, that governments must always continue to look at how people are accessing their services and ensure that services are provided in an easy, streamlined and client-centred way. There have always been, and always will be, client groups who find it more difficult to access government services—for example, people with limited literacy, people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and our

Indigenous communities. Government services must specially cater for these groups, and problem-solve in creative ways about how to ensure they are able to access the health, education and other services that they need.

As an example of this, one of the excellent public transport successes that we have implemented through my own directorate is the new flexible bus service and community transport coordination centre. The flexible bus service provides a free bus service that is bookable and travels a flexible route depending on the needs of the patrons. The client base is seniors, people with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Each group is identified as vulnerable in the community and in most cases is transport disadvantaged because of a lack of ready access to other transport alternatives.

The focus is on providing the vulnerable with a service that meets their more specific needs and a reliable and consistent transport interface with these groups. The service utilises the territory's special needs transport fleet, which are minibuses, and each of them is equipped with low steps and a wheelchair lift. The drivers are aware of the needs of the patrons and assist them where needed. I am told that the drivers, as well as the passengers, of these buses are enjoying the service as it is quite an intimate service and people are actually getting to know each other and establish ongoing relationships.

The service commenced on 1 September last year, in conjunction with the new network 14. As I have explained to members before, in network 14 we tried to make the bus network more efficient and respond to one of the most common demands, which is to straighten out the routes and make them faster and more direct. But, inevitably, as is the case with bus networks, there is a counter to that, and it is that some people have to walk further to their stops. For a fit and healthy person like me, that is no problem, but obviously for some of the older members of our community or people who struggle with mobility that is an issue. So the flexible bus service was designed to mitigate this for people who would be the most likely to struggle to adapt under that change to the network.

It is fair to say that the service had a bit of a slow start as people took some time to learn that it was available. But it has quickly become very popular and up to early March there have been around 4,000 boardings. I understand about 1,000 of these have occurred in just the last month. So we are seeing this service really taking off. I have recently met an occupational therapist who told me that her service promotes the flexible bus service because of their target group when it comes to patients. The flexible transport model is a good one and I hope it will be able to be expanded, because it does not cover all of Canberra yet. But that will of course be a matter for budget consideration.

As the minister for sport, I oversee the inclusive participation grants program, which allocated \$80,000 in 2014 to a range of community organisations, including Cricket ACT, Multicultural Youth Services for their football united program, and the ACT orienteering association, among numerous others. The grants are specifically allocated to organisations that increase participation opportunities in sport and recreation for the identified target populations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, culturally and linguistically diverse people, older adults and people with a disability.

It is also fair to say that, as a major employer, the ACT government has a role to play in its employment practices. We have discussed in this place before, of course, the respect, equity and diversity framework which each directorate has in place. The ACT government has a range of employment strategies which seek to increase diversity, but I think it is fair to acknowledge that if we look at some of the figures in annual reports there is more work to do in that space. Of course, the government has a range of other inclusion strategies.

It is fair to say that social inclusion is not all about government and it is certainly not just about supporting identified at-risk groups in our community who are at risk of exclusion, although they do, of course, form the basis of targeted programs. It is actually also about building a city that facilitates community engagement at a host of levels and provides opportunities for people to feel connected.

We all know that social isolation can come from being new to a place, living in a city where you do not have family and friends in abundance and where it is difficult to achieve connectedness. I know people have said that before about Canberra. That anecdotal evidence will always involve both sides of the story—that Canberra is a hard place in which to get to know people. I have met people who say, “No, it’s great. I’ve come here because it’s a transient population and people are always looking to make new friends.”

Overall I believe Canberra is a city where people reach out to each other and where there are a plethora of community and social activities that facilitate community connectedness. Whether it is joining one of the ACT’s many sporting clubs or cultural or arts groups or the numerous local events and festivals held throughout the year, or the many community organisations that support more disadvantaged people—charities and the like—there are plenty of opportunities for people to reach out and meet new people, form supportive relationships and be part of this city.

Within TAMS the government supports our Parkcare groups where people come together to undertake work in our nature reserves and to participate in a community activity and meet with like-minded people. In reality, the Parkcare groups do most of it; the TAMS rangers just do a little bit of facilitation along the way.

I thought about what other things TAMS does in this space to make it happen. TAMS supports community gardens where people come together with a focus on growing food, while getting some exercise and having a chance to socialise. Dog parks are in a similar vein. You probably do not think of dog parks as a social inclusion initiative, but there are stories that I and many members have heard about the dog parks over the years. I think we have even had our first dog park wedding, or at least it originated a wedding, in the ACT, involving people who met at the dog park. It is funny to think about the things that can provide those opportunities for social inclusion.

Certainly, from a Greens perspective, we are passionate about creating an urban landscape that encourages people to connect. We strongly support active and public transport for this reason, as well as reasons to do with sustainability.

Public transport itself is an extremely important consideration in supporting inclusion. We know that car dominated cities alienate vulnerable people in our community who may not be able to drive, may not have the resources to own a vehicle or simply do not have the means to get about in that way. On top of that, car dominated cities discourage the kinds of human interactions that occur incidentally when people are out and about, walking and cycling in their neighbourhoods. Walking and cycling are activities that get people out of their cars and onto the streets. People start to run into their neighbours and have conversations. When there are more people on the streets, it facilitates a sense of security—something that is especially important for women, children and the elderly.

Anecdotally, I was in a bike shop in Braddon this morning. I talked to the owner and he was telling me how he thinks Canberra has changed because people are starting to live in places where they can walk to work, as we are seeing perhaps more people living in places like the city and Braddon, and increasingly walking. He was observing how that plays out from a business point of view. People come and use the business and he starts to get to know them and see them in the street. I think that illustrates how important the urban form can be in enhancing social inclusion.

Social inclusion is a very broad topic. My speech has covered that in some ways. You could almost say there has been a grab bag of things that I have touched on. There are so many angles by which someone can think about social inclusion. I appreciate the fact that Dr Bourke brought this motion forward today. Having listened to other speakers as well, I have paused to think about things that perhaps I had not thought about as being issues of social inclusion. So I am very pleased to support Dr Bourke's motion today and appreciate the opportunity to discuss these matters in the chamber.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.53): I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this motion forward today. As health minister I want to stress that the notion of social inclusion lies at the heart of service planning and delivery within the ACT health system. This was made very clear in the health system's duty statement "Your health, our priority". The delivery of health services to all people resident in Canberra and the surrounding region, including people from vulnerable groups, is, therefore, a paramount consideration.

I would like to turn to a range of service delivery areas within ACT Health where this is relevant. Firstly in relation to our community health centres, Canberra boasts seven community health centres which provide a broad range of community-based services to the ACT population close to where they live. These are located at Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Phillip, Civic, Dickson and Hume. The Hume health centre is of course for detainees within the AMC itself.

The consumer is the centre of the model of care. They and their families are involved in decision making, and there is a focus on connecting and integrating all aspects of a person's care and treatment. Services provided within our community health centres aim to support and complement the primary care needs of the population, especially those from vulnerable or disadvantaged backgrounds. And, where appropriate, services are also able to be provided in people's homes.

The enhanced community health centre in Belconnen is a good example of the variety of services offered to support both the local and extended communities. Opened in November 2013, it provides adult, child and youth mental health services, adult, child and youth dental services, community services and allied health community rehabilitation including falls assessment clinics, obesity management, diabetes management and maternal and child health services.

The renal dialysis unit and the BreastScreen service are scheduled to open in 2015. The Belconnen Community Health Centre also houses one of the two community-based, nurse-led walk-in centres which have been extremely popular with the community. Three of our community health centres, Gungahlin, Belconnen and Tuggeranong, have been built, extended or refurbished recently as part of the Labor government's health infrastructure program.

In the area of aged care and rehabilitation, ACT Health works in collaboration with other government and non-government organisations to promote the health and wellbeing of older members of our community. We are committed to providing an enhanced quality of life for older Canberrans in close collaboration with the commonwealth. This is achieved through the provision of high quality and cost-effective services for frail older people and their carers, including through programs such as the transitional therapy care program, the Burrangiri Aged Care Plus Respite Centre in Rivett and the aged-care assessment program.

ACT Health also works in partnership with community organisations such as Arthritis ACT, Marymead, Kincare and regional community services to ensure that Canberrans who need support or assistance to optimise their capacity to live independently in the community are provided with services that are responsive and inclusive. Support to remain living independently is not just limited to those who are ageing. People recovering from illness or injury also benefit from such services.

The Health Directorate provides a wide range of equipment-related services to enable people to remain living in the community. These services, which are provided from the Village Creek Centre, include the equipment loan scheme; the ACT equipment scheme; the domiciliary oxygen and respiratory support scheme; prosthetics and orthotics, including the footwear service; the specialised wheelchair and posture seating service; and the clinical technology service workshop, including custom medical-grade footwear and mobile repair and maintenance services. The Independent Living Centre at Weston is another great example of a community-based health service that provides advice regarding assistive technology to enable consumers to remain independent and retain their quality of life.

In addition to these, there are several programs that are aimed at older people and people requiring rehabilitation to integrate back into the community after illness or injury. Some of these services are provided by the Community Rehabilitation Team, the transitional therapy and care program and the rapid assessment of the deteriorating aged at risk service. All of these programs work with vulnerable individuals, their families and carers to integrate and help maintain these individuals in their own communities, in their own neighbourhoods.

Take the issue of mental health. I have said very clearly since my appointment as health minister that the area of mental health is a significant priority for me. I am therefore pleased that in the last budget this Labor government announced growth funding for the mental health services community sector, some of the most vulnerable people in our community. The government has funded a community forensic mental health initiative, providing for short-term psychosocial support to people with a mental illness who are also involved in the justice system. This program is called the detention exit community outreach support program, and it commenced operation in March last year.

The program provides up to three months intensive transitional support for individuals who have been diagnosed with a mental illness and who are engaged in the justice system. There is a priority for people with a mental illness who are exiting the youth justice or corrections detention. The model ensures a continuum of care for people through a seamless case management partnership between ACT Health Forensic Mental Health Services and the Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria.

In question time I mentioned the development of our new mental health legislation. This amended act comes into force in November this year. The act empowers people with mental illness to be involved in determining their own treatment. Mechanisms to achieve this include considering the person's decision-making capacity and ensuring support for decision making, the opportunity to identify a nominated person to represent their views and preferences, and provisions to recognise consent directions made in advance about their treatment. These are all good examples of how we include vulnerable people when it comes to decisions that affect their own lives. It is a great example of social inclusion.

The ACT mental health framework will be a strategic whole-of-government and whole-of-community document. This document is to set a strategic direction for promoting mental health for all of our community for the next 10 years. It will supersede the existing *Building a strong foundation—a framework for promoting mental health and wellbeing in the ACT* and the associated suicide prevention strategy. Following the development of the framework, each directorate within the ACT government will be responsible for elements of its implementation. Following initial feedback from the community, further detailed work is being undertaken, and it is planned that the framework will be presented to the government for consideration before the end of this year.

Providing better support for step-up, step-down services is also important in the area of social inclusion. A program for short-term intensive community psychosocial supports will commence this year, enhancing existing mental health services. The initiative provides alternative early intervention options to hospital admission and more discharge options for supporting people with mental illness. These programs provide the least restrictive intervention for people with mental illnesses, in line with the government's policy. Consistent with our approach to engaging stakeholders across the community, it will be a partnership model between the Division of Mental Health, Justice Health, the Alcohol and Drug Service and Woden Community Services and will focus on the Belconnen and Gungahlin town centres of Canberra.

I am also very pleased to say that in the last budget the government committed ongoing funding for a coronial counselling service, a new service for the ACT. Providing clinical counselling to people bereaved by unexpected deaths—that is, deaths being investigated by the coroner—and offering counselling throughout the coronial investigation is a very important development. All too often these families were left to fend for themselves in what was already a difficult and traumatic time. It is great to see that Relationships Australia is providing this new service, in partnership with the Chief Coroner.

These are just a few examples of how the health system is working to develop and ensure effective social inclusion for vulnerable people in our community. It is a great step forward. It highlights achievements that we can undertake and more work we can do into the future.

**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) (5.03): I would like to talk about the ways the ACT government is building communities in the ACT. Planning has a key role in building communities. This is a priority for the work of the government's planning portfolio. Planning for Canberra needs to ensure a future city that is exciting, prosperous and livable for the community. Planning also needs to provide benefits to support the way communities live, work, travel and connect.

I would like to focus on how we can help to connect with people and build communities across our city. The ACT planning portfolio is involved in a number of projects that are focused on building communities, including the statement of planning intent, city plan implementation, master plans, public transport and active travel, the healthy weight initiative and active living program, and community and recreation facilities.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I want to discuss some of the key initiatives which the ACT government is progressing to build communities which help to implement the planning and transport framework set out in the ACT planning strategy 2012 and transport for Canberra 2012. The approach we are taking to integrate land use and transport planning will contribute to the development of Canberra as a compact and efficient city and will deliver on the government's vision for a connected, livable and prosperous city with strong communities.

Planning is essentially about people and communities. A connected city provides people with a greater sense of identity and belonging. As our city grows towards a population of 500,000 over the next 20 years, it is becoming increasingly important for us to address the challenges presented by creating livable, resilient and connected communities for all Canberrans.

The places where we live, work and play are important influences on how we move around our city, our social connections and our sense of belonging in the community. People are connected in cities socially, economically, culturally and physically. The capacity of our growing city and region to absorb larger and changing populations and to improve quality of life for all residents will depend to a considerable degree on the extent to which the urban environment promotes social connection.

Social connection needs to be considered in planning for our city at every level, from the overall shape of the city and region to the level of neighbourhoods, streets and communications within and between individual buildings and their occupants. These are not new issues. As a responsive government, we have already acted by committing to the development and delivery of a number of significant policies. The 2012 ACT planning strategy and transport for Canberra prioritised development along and adjacent to major transport corridors that connect the town centres.

They envision enhanced pedestrian, cycling and public transport infrastructure connecting suburbs and centres to each other. The changing demographics of the ACT will require significant shifts in planning policies to enable a choice of housing and to allow people to age in place in the neighbourhood where they are socially connected and familiar with local facilities and services.

We also need not only to ensure that our city is people friendly but also to specifically consider child and age-friendly planning policies. As Minister for Planning I am keen to ensure that there is housing choice for our mature city and that a range of housing options are able to be delivered. In this regard, I have asked the Environment and Planning Directorate to continue its work to review policies and to ensure that the territory plan and its codes can facilitate housing affordability, urban consolidation and, ultimately, sustainability.

Planning has a defining role in helping to shape Canberra as a healthy and safe city, as part of a connected city. Good urban planning can shape our neighbourhoods to create high quality public realm and spaces and encourage active travel options for walking, cycling and public transport. This in turn has benefits for quality of life, including physical and mental health.

Supporting more people to walk, cycle and take public transport can greatly reduce the demand for expensive road infrastructure and help manage traffic congestion. Walking, cycling and other forms of active transport are an easy way to increase daily physical activity and social exchange. More efficient urban transport networks mean we can spend more time connecting with friends and family, playing sport and pursuing leisure activities. There need to be more opportunities in our city for places to meet and interact.

I will now briefly turn to some current planning projects we are working on, with the focus on building inclusive communities. The consultation that I announced on 25 February on the statement of planning intent is providing me with an opportunity to engage with the Canberra community and key stakeholders to find out about their aspirations for the planning of our city. I am asking Canberrans to help me determine the planning priorities the government should focus on over the next three to five years.

It is very important to me that this statement reflects the community's options as Canberra continues to mature and grow as a major city. That is why I held four stakeholder workshops earlier this month with peak industry, community groups, research bodies and government agencies to listen to their ideas. Last week I met with older people and will soon engage youth to learn from them and to learn more about their age-specific perspectives on planning for our city now and into the future.



The statement of planning intent, while a relatively short document, will be an important document for Canberra. It will build on current ACT government policies and strategies and recognise the main contemporary challenges for our city. The statement must be taken into account by the Environment and Planning Directorate in performing its planning duties. In preparing the new statement, there is an opportunity to underscore what has been achieved to date and to highlight planning priorities to maintain momentum and shared commitment to the desired future of our city.

The new statement of planning intent is an opportunity to create pathways for innovation in other parts of the city or to increase the livability, sustainability and prosperity of the city. Recent planning success stories are the urban renewal of Braddon and the Kingston foreshore and New Acton areas. These are exciting types of active mixed use development precincts that I would like to see in other parts of our city as well.

The new suburb of Crace in Gungahlin demonstrates successfully the role of planning in building active, healthy and inclusive communities. A neighbourhood design with active streets, well-connected paths, open spaces and community facilities has been at the forefront of planning. The social infrastructure in Crace is complemented by a diverse range of housing options for young and old.

A denser urban core next to local shops and restaurants showcases well-designed townhouses, apartments and a retirement village in addition to suburban homes. The planning and design of Crace supports various community activities and lifestyles and results in lively local shops and public spaces.

Crace is a great example of space where a community and recreation facilities are provided for the benefit of everyone in the community. EPD continues to assess the demand for community facilities in new development areas, along with existing areas that may be subject to urban densification, to ensure that adequate space is maintained for these facilities into the future.

Of course, this brings me to projects that are being developed to build communities in central Canberra within the context of the city plan that was released last year. The plan sets a vision for future development in the city centre and a framework towards 2030 and beyond. The city plan is consistent with the ACT planning strategy and most certainly will contribute to urban consolidation, sustainability and strong connected communities.

Several projects are being developed as part of the city plan, including city to the lake, capital metro, planning for the Northbourne Avenue corridor and, of course, Constitution Avenue. The planning portfolio is currently progressing the city plan implementation through the city and Northbourne Avenue urban design framework study.

The ACT planning strategy also calls for master plans to be prepared. We heard some discussion about Oaks Estate earlier today. Master plans respond to the place-specific needs of the Canberra community. They will ensure that Canberra remains a city

where everybody can take advantage of its network of centres, open spaces and modes of travel—a city where everyone enjoys a sense of wellbeing, a sense of identity through connections to the community and to the past through our heritage, and can participate in a vibrant civic and cultural life.

Public transport and active travel—walking and cycling, as we have talked about—are essential for building inclusive and accessible communities. There is a growing international recognition that public transport and active travel are key features of the world's best cities and urban environments. Canberra's car use climbed significantly in the latter part of the 20th century. When many people drive, whether by choice or lack of options, our roads become congested. This also leads to a greater incidence of transport disadvantage, greenhouse gas emissions, air and noise pollution and sedentary lifestyle diseases like heart disease and diabetes. These projects are good for our city, I believe.

In conclusion, good urban planning contributes to a range of policies and actions that the government is undertaking to support and facilitate building the communities that we aspire to for our city and its citizens.

**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) (5.13): I thank Dr Bourke for moving this motion today on the important matter of social inclusion. Ensuring that every member in our community is included and able to fully participate in their community is, I think, the very reason that all of us, at least on this side, have decided to seek election to this place. It is certainly why I am standing here today. Since being here in the Assembly, I have been privileged to join with many in the community on projects and programs to give every Canberran the chance to pursue their goals and to live the life that they want to live.

Indeed, as education minister and Minister for Disability, I have responsibility for some key areas linked to social inclusion and equity. Yesterday I spoke about the government's development of the ACT disability inclusion statement and how we will ensure that all people with a disability can participate in our community. The national disability insurance scheme is a key reform that will enable people with a disability to achieve a better life and to have a greater participation in social and economic participation. The NDIS is about improving social inclusion for people with a disability.

It is about a person's overall health and wellbeing and helping them to achieve greater participation in a more inclusive society. The NDIS is about the benefits of greater community engagement with people with a disability. Indeed, if we want to see an example of social inclusion on display, look no further than the Connect and Participate Expo that is scheduled for the 28th of this month. It is a fantastic event that will showcase the range of opportunities for Canberrans of all abilities and ages to join groups and to build social connections around common interests.

The expo was a huge success last year. It is initiatives such as this that show that Canberra is an inclusive community. The ACT government signed on to the NDIS because we knew that our support systems could be better. We knew that we could do

more to ensure that people with a disability could pursue their own interests and goals. The great thing about the NDIS is that it is not about people with a disability in and of itself. It is also about our whole community and supporting people with a disability to live a good life.

Earlier today there was some comment around access to Auslan. For the information of members, there are two paths for people in the ACT to become an Auslan accredited interpreter. One is to complete an accredited testing exam in Canberra through the National Accreditation Authority of Translators and Interpreters. The other is to complete an approved suite of Auslan interpreting courses.

Six interstate institutions offer approved courses: the Deaf Society of New South Wales, Sydney TAFE, Macquarie University, TAFE SA, RMIT and the Central Institute of Technology, WA. This year the Canberra Institute of Technology is offering cert II and cert III courses and provides potential pathways for further study to become an interpreter. CIT Solutions also runs programs in conversational Auslan. Students who have completed the CIT diploma of interpreting course can apply to NAATI for accreditation as an interpreter.

It is about supporting people with a disability to build their capacity to live more independently. We are examining ways to provide better housing options as well. It is all about ensuring that there are jobs for people with a disability and helping employers understand how they can do more to include people with a disability in their workforce. The NDIS is a big reform, and there is more we still need to do to create a more inclusive society.

This government has made a commitment also to the national disability strategy, which will focus our efforts on achieving a society that is inclusive and enabling, providing equality and opportunity for each member of our community. I am proud of the way the ACT community has embraced the national disability strategy and the NDIS and taken the steps to make them a reality. It shows that we can do this. We can make our community more inclusive.

In speaking about inclusiveness, I want to talk about the role that education and training plays in bringing social inclusion to the ACT. This ACT government has been a strong advocate for education. We have consistently invested in our schools, our teachers and our students. In the ACT we have a range of programs designed to ensure that every school student can participate in their education and get the most out of their experiences. All of our schools are able to work with parents to provide individual learning plans for students and to ensure that education delivery to students is tailored to meet their needs.

The government recognises the importance of improving outcomes in the early years. This ability is essential to permanently closing the gap in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at every stage of schooling. We have implemented a range of programs targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from preschool to year 12. For example, the Koori preschool program operates at five sites across the ACT, providing families with access to preschool programs for three-year-olds as well as additional hours of preschool education for four-year-olds. Children under the age of three are welcome to attend but are to be accompanied by a parent or carer.

The tutorial support scheme supports schools in their implementation of programs designed to enhance student engagement with learning, to improve literacy and numeracy and to provide extension and/or enrichment activities that support students. Then we have allocated \$25,000 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior secondary students interested in pursuing a career in health.

We have further strengthened the role of vocational education and training with the commencement of the new skilled capital training initiative. This initiative has been designed with comprehensive supports available to assist the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, youth at risk, students identifying as having a disability and the long-term unemployed.

Another element that Dr Bourke touched on as being an indicator of an inclusive community is the value of the arts. Here in the ACT this government has implemented the community cultural inclusion program that aims to enhance access to and participation in arts and cultural activities across our community. The community inclusion program provides services based at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre and the Belconnen Arts Centre. The program officers work as creative producers and support activities through helping to develop ideas and project plans, sourcing relevant funding and finding artistic expertise to match potential projects.

One project, for example, is based in your area, Madam Deputy Speaker, at the Belconnen Arts Centre. We understand that you are a great advocate for this program, which is called Ignite. It is a pathway arts program offering arts development for artists who are living with a disability. A recent activity up there also was “Move—speak—act”. I will close by quoting a comment by one of the participants:

Participating in this program—

That is “Move—speak—act” in 2014—

every week has provided us with much more than just acting classes. It has also provided weekly social contact, the opportunity to make friends in a non-threatening environment, help to build skills that have been transferred to other aspects in our lives and opportunities to build mastery and self-esteem in a safe environment and to escape—a time out from the stresses of everyday life.

I thank Dr Bourke for bringing this matter to us. It is absolutely right that we make sure all Canberrans have a place, regardless of our ability, our disability, regardless of our postcode, regardless of our country of birth and regardless absolutely of gender or whether we want to hold hands with a partner of the same sex or the opposite sex. We are all familiar with the adage that we are all born equal. I think that motions such as this make sure that we all live as equals as well.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Molonglo) (5.23): I rise to add my thanks for and to support Dr Bourke’s motion celebrating Canberra’s social inclusiveness and this Labor government’s social inclusion agenda.

As we all know, Canberra is a growing, vibrant and increasingly diverse community. We have momentum in our community and in our economy. It is momentum for progress and momentum for all. Our character has been defined by our progressive and accepting approach to people from all over the world and from all walks of life. We understand that inclusion is not only a matter of fairness and justice but also about growth and opportunities so that inclusion contributes to the lives of everyone in our community. We understand that it builds capital in our community and our economy. As we continue to grow, it is vital that we do not lose this essential piece of our character—our inherent inclusiveness, our inherent sense of equality. We know how much Canberrans value this aspect of our city.

As my colleagues have said, inclusion and equality are among the most worthy of aspirations. Without them, as a government and as a community we cannot ensure that everyone reaches their potential. As we start to include more people in our efforts to grow our economy and our community, we start to unleash the potential of all our citizens. Our people are Canberra's greatest capital resource, the competitive advantage on which we build our future success. Just imagine how much more we can do when, as you noted, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Indigenous person feels included; when, as Ms Berry noted, the parent feels they can contribute more to their P&C; and when, as Mr Barr noted, the person in the same-sex relationship feels free to walk down the street holding hands with their partner. We should do what we can to make sure all their potential is realised.

As with any aspiration, we achieve it in many ways. It is important, of course, for our policy and legal frameworks to reflect this inclusion, as it is for our programs and services to reflect it. In some ways, this is an easier part. As leaders in the community, Assembly members have an important role, alongside many other community and business leaders, to promote inclusion. As other members have noted, changing our culture in this way is one of the harder things we have to do. Debates like today's debate are a part of that. Updates to the Assembly are important to remind us that we must always be mindful of keeping the Assembly informed on important issues such as social inclusion.

As Dr Bourke's motion outlines, this government is committed to reflecting the inclusiveness of Canberrans by implementing a comprehensive social inclusion agenda. The Barr government continues the good work of the Gallagher and Stanhope governments. Their achievements include the Marriage Equality (Same Sex) Act 2013. The passing of this bill represented the first time any jurisdiction in Australia passed any form of same-sex marriage legislation. I hope we have the opportunity to see it fully realised. There is the Human Rights Act. The ACT was the first jurisdiction in Australia to enact a human rights act, which provides an explicit statutory basis for respecting, protecting and promoting the civil and political rights of all Canberrans. And there is the NDIS. The ACT was one of the first jurisdictions to sign up to the NDIS. We did so to provide certainty to all those living with a disability and those who care for them. As other members have noted, other recent Labor achievements include the human services blueprint; the step up for our kids program; and, under the better services banner, the one human services gateway, the strengthening families program and the local services network at west Belconnen that is a model for local service delivery.

When it comes to social inclusion, we will regularly be faced with challenges, new and old. In Labor's view, there will always be an important role for government in enabling an environment of growth and opportunity so that all Canberrans can be included and fulfil their potential.

I would like to reflect more specifically on Labor's agenda and record investment in my own community of Gungahlin. As we know, Gungahlin is Canberra's latest pioneering region, growing and evolving rapidly, and now home to some 47,000 Canberrans. It is a diverse community with people from many different backgrounds. It is a community that is diverse by age, with the full range of housing needs that come with that, from young families to the aged. In the beginning, there were no schools, no roads, no shopping centres and no recreational facilities. However, in the past 10 years in particular this Labor government has invested significantly in high quality community and public infrastructure. This investment has provided community and public spaces and facilities which have at their heart bringing people together, providing the physical and built environments to promote inclusion and connect our community.

The government and community recognise that every student has a right to receive the best possible education irrespective of their ability, behaviour, background or the challenges they and their families face. In Gungahlin we have seen extraordinary investment in schools to accommodate a fast-growing population. In recent years we have seen the opening of the Franklin Early Childhood School, the Neville Bonner Primary School and the P-10 schools at Amaroo and Harrison, teaching children from their very first school experiences all the way through until they move on to college. Then we go to Gungahlin College, educating nearly 900 of Gungahlin's teenagers as they arrive at the end of their secondary education journey and step into adulthood. We also have three Catholic primary schools, and the new Catholic high schools, with John Paul College, as well as the two campuses of Burgmann college. All these schools, government and non-government, are vital to educating young people in Gungahlin, making sure they have the skills and knowledge they need to reach their potential but, just as importantly, the qualities of inclusion, fairness, tolerance and kindness.

In Gungahlin we also have a vital community services and health precinct in the town centre, with the Gungahlin Community Health Centre, the Child and Family Centre, Communities@Work and Centrelink in close proximity to one another, providing a well-connected hub of services to help those most in need.

Housing is also a vital component of social inclusion. Housing in all its forms is a priority of this government, from the affordable housing action plan to renewal of our public housing stock and our efforts to combat homelessness. As we all know, not having a safe and secure home is much more than a housing issue. Homelessness can occur as a result of domestic violence, poor health, unemployment or poverty, and it leads to poor social and economic outcomes for people and our community. Homelessness makes it difficult for people to access a whole range of services and can break the connections with the wider world that the rest of us take for granted. Members have often spoken here about the common ground model to tackle homelessness, and I look forward to the opening of the ACT's first common ground project in the Gungahlin town centre soon.

The role of sport in bringing people together and improving health outcomes should not be underestimated. There is a growing body of evidence about the benefits of team sport, in particular to young boys and girls, in building resilience and the communication skills we need to prevent and resolve conflict in our own lives—essential tools we need to build an inclusive society.

The government has made some significant investments in our community sporting facilities in Gungahlin, such as the Gungahlin Leisure Centre. This pool and fitness centre is a wonderful facility and I know it is highly valued in my community. The YMCA of New South Wales, who run the centre, recently held a swimathon at the centre to raise money for people with a disability. They also recently announced the appointment of a new swimming director, Shannon Rollason, a former high performance national-level coach whose vision for the swimming program in Gungahlin is to widen the net and include more people from more backgrounds in swimming as a community activity.

The local sporting grounds range from the ovals in Palmerston and Bonner to the district playing fields in Harrison, Nicholls and Amaroo and the Gungahlin enclosed oval. These spaces bring people together every week. There are our amazing playgrounds and the innovative new park in Crace. Each week there are inclusive community activities taking place in these playgrounds. While sport is generally an inclusive activity, we know that for many people sport is not inclusive. That is why this government, in particular the former Minister for Sport and Recreation, has developed a range of programs to build inclusion in sport.

I would also like to recognise the role of community organisations and the many churches and faith-based organisations who provide community gatherings, spaces and community services in Gungahlin, from Communities@Work's many social and community programs to the mustard seed food pantry at the Gungahlin Uniting Church and the St Vincent de Paul services run in conjunction with the Holy Spirit Catholic Parish.

At the Gungahlin Library there is a wonderful shared facility, shared between the community, Gungahlin College and CIT. With the presence of the NBN in the Gungahlin region, the library has been able to make best use of this facility through the ACT digital hub to offer free group and one-on-one services to people to learn key digital skills.

I would also like to mention the popular and very community-minded local business, My Gungahlin. My Gungahlin is a real family effort, driven by Mark and Lisa, who are dedicated to building a business that connects the Gungahlin community and is inclusive and informative.

Let me make a final mention of the broader community of Gungahlin. We are a diverse and kind community, ranging from residents of over 20 years to new residents arriving every day from many parts of the world. That sense of inclusion is apparent in local businesses, the people working in our community services and the children in our schools. There will always be more to do to promote full inclusion in our community, but we have a head start with the wonderful facilities and people in our

region.

In all its activities, the government will continue to advocate for inclusion in its legislation, policies, services and outlook and aspirations for our community. I am pleased to support the motion.

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (5.33), in reply: I thank my Labor Party colleagues and Mr Rattenbury and Ms Lawder, who have all made contributions this afternoon in their support for this motion.

Social inclusion, as we have heard, is an important aim of the ACT government. An inclusive society has many benefits, including lower crime rates and higher levels of happiness. However, the term “social inclusion” is contested and often politicised, so I will add to our discussion today by referring to its meanings.

According to the World Bank’s *New Frontiers* report series, social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, “the process of improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society”. Many of the speakers this afternoon have referenced those points.

The *Joint report on social inclusion*, published by the Council of the European Union, extensively analyses social inclusion, arguing:

... poverty and social inclusion refer to when people are prevented from participating fully in economic, social and civil life and/or when their access to income and other resources (personal, family, social and cultural) *is so inadequate as to exclude them from enjoying* a standard of living and quality of life that is regarded as acceptable by the society in which they live. In such situations people are often **unable to fully access their fundamental rights**.

To make these definitions more complete we can explore how social inclusion and exclusion work in society. The most visible manifestation of social inclusion issues is poverty. However, social inclusion is not simply a matter of poverty. Many factors intersect to impede social inclusion, including gender, ethnicity, residence, language background and sexuality. For instance, someone who is economically well off could be at risk of social exclusion as a result of the response of other people to those characteristics I have just described.

To understand the other side of social inclusion—that is, social exclusion—we need to find its underlying causes. The World Bank argues that this means not simply noting the observable aspects of poverty such as poor health and education, but asking why they are happening. Social exclusion could also be the result of attitudes and beliefs passed from generation to generation.

Social inclusion is ultimately about improving the dignity of people and recognising their value to society by raising the ability for all groups in society to participate in economic, social and civic life.

While often related to poverty, the roots of social inclusion and exclusion go far deeper. They come from entrenched social attitudes and beliefs, whether



institutionalised or informally passed from one generation to the next. To develop an inclusive society, we must also address these attitudes and encourage their replacement with more inclusive attitudes.

All Canberrans can play a part in promoting social inclusiveness. We are generally a generous lot, and many of us make an effort to extend a welcoming hand to others.

I want to acknowledge the contribution that volunteers and philanthropists play in making our community work well. In the Canberra region there are over 2,500 not-for-profit and community groups. Many of these groups rely on the hard work of more than 100,000 volunteers who work across the health, education and environment sectors and countless others. It is here that we see the principles of inclusion at work. We see actions small and large that are supporting people to be included in the life of the city.

I acknowledge, too, the growing culture of philanthropy among the business community and private sector. Hands Across Canberra and the Snow Foundation are just a couple of examples of organisations that are harnessing the goodwill of people to do something tangible for Canberrans who are doing it tough, in a respectful manner.

Another great initiative highlighting Canberra's social inclusiveness is coming up on Saturday, 28 March. The Connect and Participate Expo features over 140 social, recreational, cultural, artistic and sporting groups displaying what they do and how you can join them. I congratulate the Community Services team that kicked off the expo last year and all the community groups who took part so enthusiastically and are involved again this year. It is a chance for anyone to find out about the range of special interest groups and clubs in our community and how to get involved, but it also has a special emphasis on including people of all abilities and overcoming barriers to involvement.

The expo cleverly gives individuals—say someone with an intellectual disability or mobility issues—the chance to know what is available, a chance perhaps to try an activity, pursue an interest, and not be shy of asking how they can fit in and get involved. It is a fun day with a serious intent of building social connections, sharing common interests and being inclusive.

The CAP Expo is on Saturday, 28 March, from 11 am to 4 pm at the Old Bus Depot Markets in Kingston. On another side of the government's commitment to social inclusion, there will be a free ACTION bus running between Civic and the Connect and Participate Expo on the day. I urge everyone to be part of social inclusion in action by making it to the expo on the 28th. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

## **ACT Ambulance Service—alleged bullying**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (5.39): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes the:

- (a) toxic management culture of the ACT Ambulance Service;
- (b) year-long battle to get the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services to agree to a review;
- (c) eight months taken to determine the terms of reference;
- (d) initial completion date of August 2014;
- (e) amended completion date of December 2014; and
- (f) review is yet to be made public; and

(2) calls on the Minister to table the complete review by the close of business today.

The government today released their version of a report that should be made public. It is called *Enhancing Professionalism—A Blueprint for Change*. And when you look through the government's report you would think that there might be an outline of the nature of the problem, the scope of the problem, the penetration of the problem. But when you go through the report, there is nothing.

If members cast their minds back to the headlines concerning the toxic management culture in the ACT Ambulance Service that prompted this inquiry and look for the word "toxic", if you do a word search of the government's document, the word "toxic" does not appear. It has been sanitised, and that is the problem with what the government have presented to the community today. It is not an answer to the problems because they refuse to acknowledge the problems.

The brief history, as we all know, is that, after battling for a year, Minister Corbell, the then minister who is now clearly not the minister, agreed to an inquiry into the toxic management culture within the ACT Ambulance Service. It then took eight months to determine the terms of reference. If you agree there is a toxic management culture, your duty of care as a minister is to ensure that something is done about it quickly. It took eight months to get to the terms of reference.

We had an initial completion date of August last year, but that passed. We were then promised a completion date of December last year, and that also passed. As we know, the review is yet to be made public, even though we have got the government's answer to the review. Yes, we have a blueprint for the future. But I am afraid the blueprint fails, and it fails because this minister, Minister Burch, asked that the original report be sanitised.

For members' interest, there is a letter that the Transport Workers Union of Australia circulated to their members on Monday afternoon. It says:

Dear Member,

For many years the Transport Workers' Union (the TWU) has called for a Review into the Culture of the ACT Ambulance Service (ACTAS).

Members call for a Review supported the evidence from previous analyses into Ambulance Culture confirming that the industry suffers serious management cultural problems resulting in high levels of unresolved conflict within a dysfunctional working environment.

As you will be aware for some time delegates have advised that the Cultural Review is approaching completion and that the TWU were looking forward to working with stakeholders in delivering the outcome of the Review.

The Minister for Emergency Services will tomorrow, Tuesday 17 March 2015, release the 'Blueprint' for the future of the ACTAS. The Report to be released is, sadly, not the Report the TWU has contributed to as a major stakeholder. Indeed, as co-author of the Terms of Reference and a member of the Governance Committee we can assure you the Report to be released tomorrow resembles in very few ways the *ACT Ambulance Service Cultural Review: Institutionalising professionalism and professionalising an Institution*.

The government could not even keep the title of the report. The letter goes on to say:

We understand the Report the TWU, and the overwhelming majority of members, contributed to; has been subjected to bureaucratic sanitisation at the request of the Minister.

The bureaucratisation of the process, we believe, represents a failure of participatory democracy. Indeed, when considering what must be the clear division of authority between the Executive and administrative authority, we are now being drawn to the abyss of manoeuvring of political non-responsibility and administration by diffusion.

Regrettably, we are now forced to refocus our efforts towards convincing the Minister of the need to release the original Report. Regardless of our success in persuading the Minister we will ensure members are provided with the original Report.

We will keep members up-to-date as the matter progresses.

That is a very neat summary from the TWU! You look at the report that the government has tabled, you try and find out what was wrong, what was the scope, what was the nature and what was the penetration of the problem, and you get none of that.

If we work our way to what has been released, even the title, *Enhancing Professionalism—A Blueprint for Change* raises a question. The question would be: change from what? The toxic management culture? That is not even mentioned in the report. From bullying? That is hardly mentioned in the report. Poor management? That is hardly mentioned in the report. Indeed, one would almost think from this that the actual ACT Ambulance Service is doing pretty much okay in comparison to some of the other services around the country and the world and there is little to be concerned about.

We have an executive summary. Executive summaries normally tell you what the thing is about, but all we have is a ramble. It has a bit of history but there is no indication as to what we are fixing, and there is no indication of how it is to be fixed.

Then they have got a background in the introduction. It goes on and talks about terms of reference. It says:

The work conducted by O2C included the extensive literature review—

that is fine—

—and associated report—

okay—

—consideration of existing available data, and information gathered through interviews with key stakeholders, workshops and confidential submissions.

But apparently they do not rate inclusion in this report because they are obviously not important. So you have to ask: fundamentally what is the government hiding?

Then there is an environmental scan. There are a few pages about what the service does. Fantastic! We all know what the service does. What the environmental scan does not tell us about is the toxic management nature. We get to stakeholders on pages 16 and 36, where it says:

... while there are areas of strength across ACTAS stakeholder attributes, there were also areas of potential conflict ...

“Potential conflict” is about as strong as this report gets when describing what has been going on in the service. They are not my words: “toxic management culture”. The union started this.

Then we get to findings. There is a bit of fluff there at the front, but that is okay. You pad it out. So we go to the findings. You read the first page of the findings, and it is all about other services, progress since 2010, the other reports we have got, a couple more pages of fluff, and then finally you get to findings. “Nature of the workforce” is where it gets very interesting. It says:

Conflict and distrust seem to be widespread across the ambulance industry ... and in the case of ACTAS there are high levels of conflict as borne out in the range of observations, feedback and workshops conducted by O2C.

But really that is not news. There is no other mention of any big issues. Indeed, the report then seeks to strike at internal conflict and avert the blame from the management and say that it is actually a conflict between the uniformed staff and the non-uniformed staff. It goes on to say that the issue of division among the workforce is common. “If you’re not in green you’re not seen” summarises perceptions about the primacy of the different workforces within ACTAS.

But it does not say a great deal here. We are out of it. Obviously the original report said something compelling, because there is the summary. The summary seems to be totally disconnected from what is written. I am assuming that the summary comes from the original report, because it says:

Dispelling fear and promoting trust within ACTAS is essential to developing a professional future for the service. The acceptance of individual accountability for performance, actions and behaviour is also crucial.

The word “fear” actually does not appear in the document. So the minister is out of it; whoever wrote this is out of it. I wonder if the ESA Commissioner was forced to sign this or if he signed it willingly. Normally when you write about something and you have a summary, the summary is about what you have just written about. The word “fear” does not appear. The text does not support the summary.

Here is a hint: if you are trying to do a bit of a whitewash, at least try to make the text fit the summary. But what do we know? What did the *Canberra Times*, who got a copy of the report, say about fear and trust? They said:

The O2C report found distrust and fear, common in many ambulance organisations, was “manifest” throughout the ACT Ambulance Service.

That is not mentioned in the minister’s report. So you have to question what this report is really about. Then there is blame and bullying. This is why it is important this report is tabled, members. This is why this report should be made public, and we will get to some of the excuses in a minute. The report states:

Linked to findings 1 and 3, issues of blaming and bullying (alleged or actual) ...

Are they? Were there any? Were any found? Were any reported? We do not know, because there is no data or detail. The report continues:

... are widespread features of the ambulance world according to the literature. The review finds ACTAS is no exception.

Okay, there is something there, but, “We’re not going to tell you. We’re not going to tell you how bad, how widespread, how often.” That is all unknown. You would think that a section on blaming and bullying might use the word “bullying”. You would think it might, but the word “bullying” does not appear in the text. Apparently there is no bullying.

But wait, it is the ambulance officers’ fault. The report states:

It was generally found that ACTAS staff were often too focused on themselves (a “me too” focus) ...

How dare they! How dare they focus on themselves, minister! That is disgraceful, that the staff would have a focus on themselves. This is what happens when you do not run the service properly. Here we have got a report that in fact is blaming those who were bullied because they do not have the right attitude. This is pathetic in the extreme and it is ridiculous. Let’s go through it:

This individual focus limits self-reflection.

It also says that a focus on evaluation is important. The summary is:

Understanding, identifying unacceptable behaviour is crucial to creating an acceptable culture. Establishing and enforcing appropriate procedures for unacceptable behaviour is necessary.

Bullying does not appear in the section. This is why, Mr Rattenbury, this report should be made public. But what does the *Canberra Times* say about what the O2C report says? It says:

In one workshop, the author said the anger of participants was both “palpable and visible”.

The relationships were described as “unprofessional, harassing in the broadest sense of the word”. The article continues:

Some workers surveyed by the consultants spoke of the service being a boys’ club rife with nepotism, and institutionalised bullying by senior staff.

Another spoke of a culture of shifting problems or covering them up.

None of this appears in this report. Let’s go through it. We will try one more, “Implementation of respect equity diversity framework”. It says:

... ACTAS does not sufficiently adhere to it, but it is getting better. The RED framework is not seen to be lived in the ACTAS.

That is one quote. Yet what are the actual results in the report? The O2C report also notes:

The organisation was given a strikingly poor result by surveyed workers for its performance against the ACT public service respect, equity and diversity framework, which the report said it neither adhered to nor endorsed.

If you listen to the minister, it is okay; it is getting better. Those surveyed said there was a perception that managers were prepared to eliminate harassment and bullying. According to the *Canberra Times*, the O2C report noted the organisation was given a strikingly poor result. That, members, is why this report must be tabled.

We do not know what we are fixing. Therefore, we do not know which bits of this report, as released by the minister, are doctored and have been sanitised. This is embarrassing. It does have a little footnote, footnote 13. The review finds ACTAS is no different:

Investigation of specific claims was beyond the O2C remit.

That begs the question: what were the specific claims, were they investigated and what were the outcomes? We know that disciplinary processes in the ACTAS were

appallingly slow. I know of one member who was suspended in July the year before and has been on suspension for about 90 weeks now. It is pathetic in the extreme. This minister is pathetic in the extreme for perpetrating this lie of a report. That is what it is. What we need to do if we are going to fix this is get the substance on the table. Otherwise it will never be fixed. The excuse is:

Ms Burch says the report, obtained by Fairfax Media, is so inflammatory and potentially damaging and dangerous to some individuals, including ambulance officers who spoke out in confidence, that she has been advised not to release it.

According to Ms Burch, if you speak out as an ambulance officer, you are at risk. That is what the minister said. Let me read it again:

Ms Burch says the report, obtained by Fairfax Media, is so inflammatory and potentially damaging and dangerous to some individuals, including ambulance officers who spoke out in confidence, that she has been advised not to release it.

What is she saying? Nothing has changed. “If you speak out, if you stand up for your rights, if you want to work for a better workplace, if you want to have a better ambulance service, just be careful because you’re at risk.” I do not know how we can have any confidence in this report. I do not know how we can have any confidence in this minister when she clearly expresses the sentiment that the toxic management culture continues and you should not speak out because you are at risk. (*Time expired.*)

**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) (5.55): I lost count of the number of times Mr Smyth joyfully, gleefully, said the word “toxic”. A blueprint for change has been supported by the TWU today; they are on record as saying they are happy to work with the government, ESA and ACTAS on this blueprint for change. Mr Smyth spent 15 minutes calling the Ambulance Service “toxic”, calling management “toxic” and describing the blueprint as “rambling”. He implied that the Commissioner for Emergency Services was forced to sign an executive summary. He penned it; he signed it; he owns it. And he will deliver on the blueprint for change.

It would seem that Mr Smyth—and I have been watching him all afternoon as he has been preparing for this—is immensely disappointed that we have a blueprint for change, an action plan, that will see this oversighted by an independent group comprising members of ACTAS, ESA, the TWU and an independent expert to provide me with three-monthly reports. He seems to be disappointed that I have stood up and said, “Change must happen.” To do anything else is just not an option. That is why we have this blueprint.

Mr Smyth, in those 15 minutes, not once recognised the growth in the great service that ACT ambulance provides to this community; rather, he wants to perpetuate the notion, the language and the image of our Ambulance Service being toxic. It is a good ambulance service. It is one of the best performing ambulance services in this country. It has had significant reviews—the Lennox review 2010, Lennox 2014 and the O2C report.

The Lennox report identified the growth in its service from being one of the lower performing agencies to being one of the top performing agencies here in the ACT. We are a growing city, an ageing city, and we have seen an increase in demand for ambulance services, but we have seen this government provide the investment needed to match its growth. The next area of growth is in organisational behaviour and culture, and that is the area that will be addressed today.

Mr Smyth read out at length—I do not think he missed a word—from a letter put out by a representative of the TWU. I know that a letter was delivered to him, I think, before it was even delivered to me. I find that letter offensive, and I have told the officer from TWU that I find it offensive.

**Mrs Dunne:** A point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke):** A point of order.

**Mrs Dunne:** I only have one thing to say: standing order 42.

**MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Please carry on, Ms Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Mr Assistant Speaker, I have let the two officials from the TWU know, in no uncertain terms, that I find that letter offensive, wrong and so off the mark that it would defy credibility to read it out in this place.

The previous minister commissioned a review. A consultant company, O2C, was given the task to do that. I saw a final draft of that report in the back half of February—less than a month ago. The advice that accompanied it was that there were problems with making the report public because of reputational or professional damage—personal concerns regarding individuals that could be identified in that report. What would the opposition have me do? Ignore advice from the directorate and legal advice that something may cause somebody professional damage or personal damage? What would they say on that side of the chamber if I were to do that? I instructed the directorate to go to the findings and to go to the recommendations. At the end of the day, that is at the heart of this.

*At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.*

**MS BURCH:** For the past couple of weeks the directorate has been working on how to lift the key findings and recommendations from the O2C report. At the end of the day, that is how you will effect change—recognise the findings, accept the findings, recognise the recommendations and put action in place to address those recommendations. That is what this does. The blueprint for change clearly sets out—and I have assured the Transport Workers Union and the workforce of ACTAS—that the core of the findings remains the same and the recommendations that were in the O2C report sit in this blueprint for change.



It simply beggars belief that the opposition has not said, “Well done. We’ve come to the end of this review. There is some confronting reading and confronting findings. What are you going to do to improve it?” What I have done is put out the blueprint for change, with its implementation plan, with an oversight committee to make sure that change happens.

The O2C report made a range of findings and recommendations, and they are wholly captured within this blueprint for change. Mr Smyth is disappointed by that. The TWU, who have clearly—as everyone here knows—got a copy of both reports, are not saying that one is sitting so far apart from the other; rather, they are saying they welcome the government’s action, they welcome the blueprint, they welcome the oversight committee and they welcome my absolute commitment to change. As I have said, to do anything else is simply not acceptable.

This report is about making sure that the change happens. ACTAS has grown exponentially. Its performance in our community, as I said, is almost second to none. It is important that the community continues to have the confidence it needs to have, and currently ACTAS enjoys that confidence of the community. But Mr Smyth wants to keep digging. He is not happy until he uses words like “toxic” and “shameful”—all the negative stuff that he can find, rather than joining with the TWU, the government and the commissioner and saying, “What do we do next to make a difference?” There were no comments in his 15 minutes around the recommendations and the way forward.

What I released this morning—it is available on the ESA website—was this blueprint for change. What became apparent to me during today’s discussions was that the draft implementation plan was not on the website earlier this morning, as I understand it, because I have asked for it to be put on the website during the day. This is a draft, because we have committed to go to the workforce and the stakeholders, to work with the TWU to make sure that that action plan is the right action plan. We will appoint an independent person to join the oversight group. We will finalise that action plan. And make no mistake: that will be delivered.

It concerns me that the TWU have—and I know they have, because we have seen the correspondence—released a copy of the O2C report to their members. I have expressed my sincere disappointment that the TWU have done that. Why am I disappointed by that? It is for the reasons that I have given. I have seen the O2C report. It is a confronting read. It is a very personal read for individuals concerned. The advice I had was that it would cause personal and professional damage beyond normal confrontation. If you are in a senior management position, a front-line position, if you are in a position where somebody can criticise your activities, that in itself is confronting. But when the advice is that there are serious problems with its public release, and Mr Smyth wants me just to release it, anyway—hooley dooley, as some would say—where would that put you if you were in this position? Would you—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Standing order 42, Minister Burch.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you. Would Mr Smyth be in a position or would he, indeed, release something with the advice that it would be professionally damaging to someone?

When I met with the TWU representative last Thursday, I made it very clear to him that the advice I had was that I could not release that report. But I made a commitment that we would have a blueprint for change, and that that work was in progress. I also offered to the representative that, should he want to make a statement to be included behind that of the commissioner, I was prepared to include such a statement. The TWU could say, “This isn’t exactly what we wanted, but the recommendations are the same and we’re happy with the action plan.” They chose not to do that. I remain personally very affronted and disappointed that the TWU rep put out that letter that indicated that I would doctor the O2C report. I have not. I have simply parked it to the side. It is in the same form in which I received it. I have not doctored it. I have just not released it, Mr Smyth. You must get that through—and I will use your word—your pathetic head that this sits to the side. It informed the government’s response to the call for action, to the call for change. That is what this blueprint is. Mr Smyth is Mr Negativity. He is almost shameful—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister Burch, withdraw. Refer to Mr Smyth by his title and in no other way.

**MS BURCH:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Mr Smyth has cherry-picked from this report. He is saying that some of this is sanitised. He referred to “me first”. I will go to this in the findings. He said that those who were complaining were almost being bullied for speaking up. Let me go to page 24 of the blueprint for change, where O2C advise that—and this is from the report that I have read:

... individuals at all levels of ACTAS were quick to blame ... ‘they’ for their individual troubles. When pressed, ‘they’ quickly transformed into anyone and everyone above ‘me’ in the organisation.

That is confronting. It is from the O2C report. We have not tried to hide it. It is here in the public domain. The organisation has had the courage to put comments like that in a public report. We have not shied away from the need to change. The commissioner has not. That is why this report stands.

If you look at this report, Mr Smyth, and if you look at the literature review that is also in the public domain, a literature review indicates that the ACT Ambulance Service is not unique in having cultural difficulties. ACTAS has grown at a rapid rate. Its technical capabilities and service response lead the nation. The next task for it now is to improve its internal culture—a commitment we have not stepped away from, a commitment that we will embrace and a commitment that I will ensure is delivered.

We are all occasionally guilty of listening to each other’s media performances. There was a level of interest that apparently Mr Smyth sees the oversight group as something I am setting up to succeed. Well, thank you, Mr Smyth—through you, Madam Speaker—I am glad you recognise that there is a clear blueprint for change, a

clear action plan—a draft, as it is—a literature review and an independent oversight group, and that they are set up to succeed. It will succeed, because the commissioner, myself, the Transport Workers Union and every member of ACT Ambulance Service, from the newest front-line recruit up to the chief officer, will make a commitment to have the best service that this country and this community can have.

I thank Mr Corbell for taking this commission through. It was difficult. It has been confronting for the service. It has stepped up to that, Mr Smyth, and change will be delivered.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (6.11): Obviously this is an important discussion we are having this afternoon, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to contribute to the debate. I certainly understand that Mr Smyth is very keen to see an ACT Ambulance Service that is working well and is free from mistrust or inefficiencies or cultural problems. I think we all share that view, and that has certainly been the commentary in the public domain today.

When there are problems, or accusation of problems, in an institution like ACTAS it is of course very concerning. I certainly share Mr Smyth's concern and his desire for a professional, respectful and well-operating ambulance service. Minister Burch and the other members of the government presumably share the same concerns. We all acknowledge that there have been issues in the service; I do not think there has been any secret made of that fact. The recently released report, the one Minister Burch put out today—as well as the media reports—has brought this into the light. Minister Burch has promised to respond to these problems with the utmost seriousness and commitment, and I think that is a commitment that we can be pleased about.

To get to the crux of this debate, it appears to me that Mr Smyth wants to make public the full O2C report, despite presumably being aware of the comments that have been made about the legal advice that releasing the report could have adverse effects for particular individuals. It could identify and damage individuals and compromise people's privacy, breach a promise to participants that their responses would be confidential and, as a corollary to that, jeopardise staff participation in future surveys and reviews of their workplaces.

My view, which I am sure I am going to get some feedback for, is that the O2C report does not need to be released, potentially causing all of those harms, particularly when the minister has today released the blueprint report which adopts all of the recommendations from the O2C report. In some circumstances there has to be a mechanism whereby personal and confidential information can be reported to a government for action without that information being released in a way that will have an adverse impact on individuals.

The important outcome is that the recommendations are adopted and that the government responds to them—not that the government releases the personal and sensitive commentary of individuals in ACTAS who provided information in confidence. It is simply one of the challenges of government to be able to move forward in a way that does not reveal confidential information or expose participants

to legal liability but also responds effectively to the concerns and recommendations that have been raised. The plan that the government has just released this afternoon seems to set that out quite clearly.

The document, *Enhancing Professionalism—A Blueprint for Change*, synthesises several pieces of work: the 2010 Lennox review, a literature review which looks at issues across the ambulance industry more broadly than the ACT, and the report that has been the focus of this debate, the O2C Solutions report which reviews current organisational behaviours. As the blueprint report says in its executive summary, it provides the blueprint and drivers for organisational change, and this seems a good approach to me.

The blueprint document covers the findings of the reports in 11 categories, as well as eight recommendations. These encompass the recommendations from the O2C report. It is appropriate, I think, to include the findings and recommendations here but not to include the specific identifying information. If there is a finding, for example, that bullying is a problem, that is sufficient without needing to include a quote from a particular person that might identify them and a person they accuse of bullying.

I will put on the record my strong desire that this blueprint report and its recommendations are taken very seriously and that the government takes appropriate action in response. I am confident that Minister Burch will be doing that. She has reflected that already in her comments and her proposed amendment to the motion. I note that Minister Burch has an amendment that she intends to move today. I have indicated that I will be happy to give Minister Burch leave to take the floor again in a short time, once I have completed my remarks, so that she can move her amendment at that time. It is quite clear that she has circulated that amendment and I think it would be appropriate to come back and move through that procedural point in a moment.

It is true that there are problems in the Ambulance Service that need attention and need to improve. I think that has been made very clear today. I reflect on the comments that Mr Smyth made about the need for transparency on this. Anybody who has read today's paper, who listened to the Emergency Services Commissioner on radio this morning and who listened to Minister Burch on radio this morning will have had it made perfectly clear to them that there is an acknowledgement of the problems within the ACT Ambulance Service. Nobody, I think, is seeking to hide that. To me, that is the important thing here. It is important that the problems are in context. That is a broader question. To focus only on the negatives or to inflate them is potentially to do a disservice to ACTAS, unnecessarily undermine public faith in the Ambulance Service and potentially make the problems harder to deal with.

Some context is provided by the literature review. To quote the blueprint document, the comprehensive literature review "makes clear that the ambulance industry as a whole is still in a period of transition to professional recognition and ACTAS has similar characteristics to many other ambulance services both nationally and internationally".

The point is that cultural and behavioural issues similar to those in ACTAS are common in ambulance services. It seems that the particular type of work, employees and stresses in this industry often lead to these types of problems. It is also important to acknowledge that although, yes, there are clearly issues in ACTAS, the Lennox review revealed that our Ambulance Service is also performing very well in many areas. Its response times and patient satisfaction results are of the highest standards. It is important to acknowledge this and to thank the service for its broadly excellent service. With all of the negativity that is being aired about ACTAS, I imagine it can be somewhat demoralising for the hardworking staff and can give the wrong impression about the overall level of performance.

I note, as Mr Smyth has, that the review and the report have taken longer than initially expected. It is not ideal, of course, but my understanding is that the delay is due to the reviewer engaging in broad consultation for the report and also undertaking a literature review. I do not believe it was the government ignoring the issue; it was the reviewer being very thorough to produce a good outcome. Yes, it took time to determine the terms of reference, but I understand this was quite complicated and there was quite some back and forth on it because it involved numerous stakeholders.

One way to proceed would have been for the government to unilaterally determine the terms of reference and plough ahead with the review. Another way was to engage the stakeholders and ensure the process was consultative and that there was agreement. That can take much longer, but that is my understanding of what happened. There was quite a bit of back and forth, and I suspect ultimately we had an inquiry that actually looked at the issues that all parties could agree needed to be looked at. I personally am comfortable that that is a better way to go than if the minister had just said, "Right, these are the terms of reference," and the union and the staff had not had an opportunity to participate in that.

In conclusion, I support the motion with the amendment proposed by Ms Burch. I agree that the government has taken a responsible and appropriate approach by releasing the blueprint report, which includes the findings and recommendations from the O2C report but does not include the problematic details which can be categorised as confidential and possibly incriminating.

I took the measure of personally speaking with the Secretary of the TWU in the lunch break today, and I asked about this matter, what progress had been made and where the union stood. I had a very clear and direct indication that the union supports the approach that has been taken in dealing with the report in this way and the fact that the blueprint is now on the table and that the recommendations are being followed through. That is what it is ultimately about.

I look forward to the government responding actively to the report, because this is about the outcomes. It is about implementing the recommendations and seeing improvements in the ACT Ambulance Service, noting of course that significant cultural changes, which are the type being discussed in this report, will take some time. There seems to be little doubt about that. These things are not easy, but we must set off on the pathway and there must be a commitment from both the government and members of the Ambulance Service to achieve that.

I listened to Mr Smyth's comments today. I have thought long and hard about this because this issue has been looming for a day or so. There have been conversations floating around about it and Mr Smyth tabled his motion yesterday. At the end of the day, Mr Smyth is saying the report must be released. The thing I cannot resolve is what benefit will result from that. It is quite clear, as I have touched on already, that there is a clear public understanding that there are problems in the Ambulance Service. There is a clear understanding in this place, there is obviously a clear understanding amongst staff, because people have voiced it very clearly, and there is a clear understanding in the media. So everybody knows it. As I said earlier, it was well spelt out on radio this morning and well spelt out in the *Canberra Times* today. I think it is fair to say that the minister has been quite up-front, as has the commissioner, in saying that there are real problems in the ACT Ambulance Service.

But we have also been given advice that to release the report would be compromising and disadvantageous to particular individuals, so I do not know what benefit would result from releasing the actual report that goes to government when all of the issues have been put on the table. The only thing I can see is that Mr Smyth wants to be able to come into the chamber and quote sections of it and really drive this issue home for a political benefit. For me, it is all about the outcomes. We have got this blueprint. Everybody knows there is a problem. It has been plenty discussed. Being able to come into this place and pull out quotes that will clearly be colourful because participants in the survey have evidently been very honest, based on some of the leaked bits of the report that we have heard, I do not think will produce any positives. On that basis I will be supporting Minister Burch's motion. I believe it is a better approach.

**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) (6.22): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after "That this Assembly", substitute:

"(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Emergency Services Agency is undergoing a process of reform and this has been underpinned by a number of reviews of the organisation;
- (b) the Lennox Review showed that ACTAS is one of the best ambulance services in Australia;
- (d) the ACT Government commissioned O2C Solutions to conduct a review of organisational behavioural aspects of the ACT Ambulance Service;
- (d) the O2C review was progressed involving the Transport Workers' Union;
- (e) the O2C report makes a range of key findings and recommendations;

- (f) the Minister has received a blueprint document from the ESA Commissioner outlining the future directions for ACTAS, and that this blueprint document wholly captures the key findings and recommendations for the O2C report;
  - (g) the Minister has released this blueprint document today; and
  - (h) the Minister's commitment to implement the recommendations of the O2C report and the blueprint; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to:
- (a) deliver regular updates to the Assembly on progress in implementing these actions; and
  - (b) continue to work with the TWU and other stakeholders to ensure ACTAS continues to deliver its high-quality services to the ACT community.”.

**Ms Lawder:** A point of order, Madam Speaker, I do not have an amendment circulated by Mr Gentleman; both my papers have “Moved by Ms Burch” at the top.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is one that is vaguely amended; it has Ms Burch's name crossed out and Mr Gentleman's name written on the bottom. I presume that is the one that we are talking about.

**Ms Lawder:** At the top it says, “Moved by Ms Burch.”

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes, it does. But I presume we are talking about the one on the page with Mr Gentleman's name written on it.

**Ms Lawder:** Thank you for the clarification.

**MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (6.23):** The circulating of the amendment is totally indicative of how the government is handling this issue. The minister forgot to move the amendment. She forgot to modify the amendment. Mr Gentleman moved an amendment that he did not speak to. If I were Mr Gentleman, I would not speak to it either.

Mr Rattenbury asked the question: what is the benefit? I ask Mr Rattenbury to read the report and give this place a summary of what the problem is. If you read this report you do not know what the problem is because it has been sanitised. It has been cleaned out. I predicted in front of the media today that we would have the minister proudly tabling the report and then giving us quarterly updates on how they have achieved what they set out to do, and I am sure we will get that. But we do not know what they are addressing, and that is why the release of the report is important. I was rung by an individual this morning who has commentary in the report. He said, “I want this report out there because nothing will change unless we know what's going on.” If you read the blueprint for change, there is no indication of what it is we are changing.

The minister was upset that I used the words “toxic management culture”. That is what the union called it. I do not know what this report is addressing because it is not detailed. We do not know the nature of the problem because it is not detailed. We do not know the scope of the problem because it is not detailed. We do not know the penetration of the problem through the staff because it is not detailed. We do not know who is perpetrating the problem because it is not detailed. We do not know what the government is fixing. Apparently the minister does—that is okay because she has parked the report; it is off on the side. To use her words, “I have parked the report to the side. It sits to the side.” Well, while it is sitting on the side, it will continue to fester, because people will not know if it is worth standing up and having the courage to come out and say, “These are the problems as I see it.”

We heard the report is a confronting read. I suspect if you have a toxic management culture it probably is a confronting read. If one looks at the quotes in the *Canberra Times* this morning, it sounds like it is a confronting read. But we do not have any of that analysis. We do not know what was said. If we go to the section headed “Implementation of respect equity diversity framework”, it seems there was some sort of feedback. What was the feedback? Surely there is a summary that says, “Ninety per cent were happy and 10 per cent were unhappy,” or “Ninety per cent were unhappy and 10 per cent were happy,” but we are not even allowed to know that, Mr Rattenbury. So I challenge you—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Standing order 42, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Through you, Madam Speaker, I challenge Mr Rattenbury—he can have leave to speak again—to stand up, having read the report no doubt, and tell us the scope, the nature and the penetration of the problem and, indeed, if somebody is part of the problem. I do not think he can—and I know he will not—because it is not contained here. We have got the minister’s answer to a problem that is totally undefined except that she is upset by the use of the words “toxic management culture”. That was the start of it. They are not my words; they are the words of the TWU. The O2C report was to address that, but we are not allowed to see that.

We have the government’s answer in a highly sanitised way. What did the minister say? “The core of the findings remains the same.” So even the findings are not the findings of the report, but the core of it is there. You only have to read section 4.1, finding 1, “Nature of the workforce”, to know that what it talks about is not what the summary refers to, that finding 2, “Blaming and bullying”, is not what the summary refers to and that finding 3, “Implementation of respect equity diversity framework”, does not relate to the body of what is in the text.

How can one have any confidence in the report when it has been butchered so badly—one, I suspect to protect Mr Corbell and the government and, two, to set the minister up on a path so she can fix these things? We know the minister has form on this. You only have to go back to the care and protection issues where the minister covered her ears and said, “La, la, la, la, la. Not listening; don’t want to hear it,” and then came out with a blueprint. “I’ve got a problem. We’ll have a blueprint.” If Mr Rattenbury wants some credibility on this, instead of ringing the head of the TWU perhaps he should have rung the gentleman that has been handling it.



Perhaps he should have gone back to his own policy. I love the Greens website. It should be entitled “The things we believe in when it suits us”. The website says that one of the goals of the Greens in government is that they want open and transparent access to government documents. Here is your chance, Mr Rattenbury. Stand up for your principles. You like standing up in this place—through you, Madam Speaker—and telling us of the goals of the Greens. What the Greens want, Mr Rattenbury has an opportunity to get today—open and transparent access to government documents. Yes, it might be unpalatable reading for some, but I understand that the team at O2C did the cultural review for the Defence Force and that has helped change the Defence Force. I am not sure the defence minister issued a doctored report in that case, and that is what we have here. We have a doctored report.

**Ms Burch:** It is not a doctored report.

**MR SMYTH:** You have clearly changed the text—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Standing order 42, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Through you, Madam Speaker. Clearly the text has been changed. Remember what was said—the core of the findings remains the same. So we have a core, but we do not have the text that backs up the core. I cannot believe that a professional, as the person who heads up O2C is, would write a summary that was not addressed by the text.

We do not know what is in the report. We do not know what the government is addressing. We do not know the size of the problem. We do not know the scope of the problem. We do not know the penetration of the problem through the ACT Ambulance Service. We do not know who is responsible for the problem. Did it just happen? That is the implication of some of what is said here. “Oh, it just happens. It happens in all those ambulance services; therefore it’s okay.” Well, it is not okay to use as an alibi that this is common in ambulance services. It might be, but it is not in our ambulance service.

Yes, the officers do a great job; I have said that many times and I will say it again. They actually do a great job despite the government, despite the management, despite the minister. They do the job because they are professionals. Let us go through the litany. Who has forgotten the defibrillator fiasco? Who has forgotten the 10-year procurement process for the uniforms? Who has forgotten the disciplinary matters, some of which have gone on for more than a year, with senior officers sidelined on full pay? Just leave them in the departure lounge and they will all go away. That is this government’s way of treating staff, and we are getting another dose of it today.

Mr Rattenbury said, yes, there is a problem in ACTAS. But we knew that before the report was instigated. We knew that before the inquiry was started. What we are none the wiser about is the size and scope and nature of that problem and what the government is actually addressing. It is not clear. I defy any member to stand up and cite from this report what the problem actually is. When you go to the section on bullying and blaming the bully and the widespread features of ambulance services around the world, according to the literature the word “bullying” does not appear. It

would appear there is no bullying, according to this report. There is no example of the type and nature of the bullying. There is no enunciation of how it has been allowed to get there and how it is to be addressed.

We have some fine words and fine recommendations and we are going to get quarterly updates from the minister. But, at the end of the day, we do not know what we are addressing. Unless you know what you are addressing, you cannot fix it. As members of this place, unless we know what the government is addressing, we have no ability to judge whether the government is achieving what it says. That is why this report should be made available, should be tabled in this place and should be discussed so that it does not happen again. Unless we know what has gone wrong, it will happen again.

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Ms Berry	Ms Fitzharris	Mr Coe	Ms Lawder
Dr Bourke	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Ms Burch	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Corbell	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## National Close the Gap Day

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (6.36): I rise to note the National Close the Gap Day being celebrated around Australia tomorrow, 19 March. One of the achievements of the close the gap campaign has been forcing governments to commit to targets to achieve equality in outcomes across a range of criteria between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and other Australians. As a result, last month the Prime Minister delivered the seventh annual closing the gap statement, assessing the strategy's progress and identifying the many areas that need further attention.

Six years ago former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a pledge that the government would lead a new national effort to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It was a significant show of commitment to Indigenous affairs by the federal government.

Today, gaps continue to persist in health, including the social determinants of health, such as housing, education and employment. More still needs to be done in order to achieve the nation's goal of closing the gap by 2031.

The Prime Minister's 2015 report on closing the gap indicates areas where successive governments are failing to meet the targets. We are not on track to meet the target of closing the life expectancy gap by 2031. We are failing to meet the target to ensure Indigenous four-year-olds have access to early childhood education by 2013. We have failed that one.

There has been no progress in halving the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018. There has been no progress in halving the gap in employment outcomes by 2018. Yet we have halved the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five, and halved the gap for Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 24 in year 12 attainment.

The close the gap steering committee, in their 2015 progress and priorities report, pointed to the reductions in smoking rates—an area the ACT has made progress on with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tobacco control strategy—improvements to maternal and child health outcomes, and demonstrated inroads into the impact of chronic diseases as evidence that the closing the gap strategy is working.

We also need to remember the importance of reconciliation and working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to achieve this change. Aboriginal community-controlled health services are making a significant impact against both the health and education related close the gap targets.

The close the gap campaign steering committee also found that these services provide the best return on investment in terms of providing both access to health services and the quality of those health services, as well as being major employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. These community organisations and health services need funding and support in order to ensure their continued success.

The ACT has made some progress in closing the gap in health and education outcomes through a number of targeted programs. I note in particular that the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing year 12 in the ACT will, on current trends, soon equal the average percentage of all students completing year 12.

It is also significant to note that in Australia we have recently achieved parity in the number of first-year Indigenous medical students with the proportion of Indigenous people in the Australian population.

Governments must maintain their commitment to Indigenous Australia but also remember that it will take time and that we still have a long way to go. As Matthew Cooke, Chairperson of NACCHO, noted, "Closing the gap is about generational changes and there are no quick fixes."

The close the gap strategy is an integral part of government policy, just as Indigenous Australians are an integral part of our nation. It is essential that we remain committed to achieving the strategy's targets. We cannot claim to be an equitable nation while there is a gap, until Indigenous Australians are enjoying the same health, housing, education and employment outcomes as the rest of the nation.

### **Lunar new year**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.40): On 18 February I had the pleasure of attending celebrations at the Sakyamuni Buddhist Centre in Lyneham for lunar new year. This year we farewelled the Year of the Horse and welcomed the Year of the Goat. The founding abbot of the Van Hanh Monastery, which was established in Lyneham in 1983, is the Most Venerable Thich Quang Ba, and he was our gracious host for the night. My colleagues Brendan Smyth and Yvette Berry were also in attendance. I also attended last year.

As with last year, the food and drink, the singing and dancing, especially the lion dance, and the speeches were all very enjoyable. I would like to congratulate all the staff and volunteers who were involved with the considerable organisational requirements that were undertaken. I would also like to commend the Buddhist centre on their affordable housing project. It was a very enjoyable evening, and I look forward to attending again next year.

### **Women—achievements**

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Molonglo) (6.42): Yesterday I spoke in the chamber about the achievements of Amanda Whitley and HerCanberra. I mentioned that just last week HerCanberra had moved from an online forum to a hard-copy publication in launching their first magazine, called *Magazine*. Tonight I would like to talk about some of the women that were outlined and honoured in this magazine in the feature item “15 women to watch in 2015”. The feature was designed to mark International Women’s Day on 8 March. I had the great honour of being included among these amazing women, and I would now like to take the opportunity to mention them. They come from a range of sectors in the Canberra community—from the design and creative sector to the publishing sector, the community sector, the science and research sector, the music sector and the business sector. I would also like to note, on the back of Dr Bourke’s adjournment speech, that two of the women are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Nellie Peoples, referred to in the magazine as “The maker”, is a designer in metal smithing. Nellie first studied architecture, which led to her decision to study gold and silver smithing at the ANU. In that role she was recognised internationally and subsequently went on to win the inaugural design CBR Designcraft Craft + Design Award. In 2015 Nellie has plans to develop a studio and work space and a goal to expand her practice internationally.

There is Zoya Patel, referred to as “The publisher”. Zoya is only 25, but already she has been editor-in-chief of *Lip* magazine and last year founded her own publication,

*Feminartsy*, a space which explores gender through personal stories and creativity. Zoya came to Australia at the age of three and has had cultural challenges in her own life, but she and her family are proud to have overcome these and set out on their own path.

Joanna Allebone is referred to as “The communicator”. Many will know Joanna through her role as a director of corporate relations and communications at the YWCA of Canberra. As Joanna herself says, she is working towards a “world where reconciliation, justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment are promoted and sustained through women’s leadership”. In this role, Jo dreams of “telling important community stories, and making the world a better place” to live as well as benefiting women in her own backyard.

Tegan McAuley and Belinda Neame, referred to as “The marketers”, are from the well-known marketers Hustle and Scout and the Forage. Tegan and Belinda found that there was a lack of opportunities for the creative community in Canberra. Instead of despairing about that, they set up their own markets. They originally established the Forage and Hustle and Scout in New Acton, but very quickly grew out of those digs and then moved to the Fairbairn precinct. In 2015 they are going to bring new initiatives and a new location for the Forage and Hustle and Scout.

Louisa De Smet is referred to as “The trailblazer”. Louisa, as a fashion design student, was showcased in Sydney fashion week, a huge achievement, and since then has been one of the stalwarts of the Canberra fashion industry. As *Magazine* quotes:

Her love of design inspires her to create pieces that are not “mere garments” but “wearable, functional sculptures for the human form”.

On Friday, Louisa and her business partner, Steven, launched a new fashion design showcase in conjunction with one of the oldest German furniture manufacturers, Walter Knoll, at Designcraft in Hume.

Sally Moylan is described as “The wild child” but is perhaps more widely known as a fantastic cricketer for the ACT Meteors. She had a childhood dream of becoming a wildlife warrior and was recently recognised as the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student of the year at the ACT Training Excellence Awards for her studies in horticulture, conservation and land management. She juggles full-time work, study and national cricket; for a 26-year-old, that is no mean feat. One of the things that Sally said to me when I met her last week was, “If just one per cent of the budget that goes to paying our male cricketing national players went to the women’s national team, they would be able to afford to play cricket full time.” That is quite an interesting statistic.

Heidi Stratford, a public servant, is referred to as “The advocate”. Heidi’s role behind the scenes in promoting brand Canberra is vital. She is passionate about Canberra and believes that Canberra’s secret weapon is a passion and belief in itself. She has the title of the world’s coolest capital in her sights, as does this government, and she is looking forward to capturing that title from our near neighbour Wellington.

I look forward to telling the chamber more about these women tomorrow.

## Gungahlin—Crace

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.47): I rise today to speak about Crace, a vibrant community in my electorate. The Crace joint venture was formed in January 2008. From the beginning, the suburb of Crace was designed to be a different type of suburb, one that would challenge people's perceptions of what a suburb should be. Construction of the suburb commenced in 2008 after a master plan had been developed. The master plan combined a vibrant, high density urban core surrounded by the suburban precinct. The suburb has been designed to offer the highest levels of community, sustainability and amenity. The near-completed suburb includes a shopping centre, childcare facilities, a community garden, medical facilities and 23 hectares of parkland.

After the first sales of terrace homes in April 2009, the Crace builders panel opened the demonstration village. Suburban land was released in 2010 and the final blocks in the suburb were sold in 2013.

The suburb of Crace was named after Edward Kendall Crace. As I have mentioned before, Edward Crace was a pastoralist who owned extensive landholdings, including several properties in the area: Ginninderra, Gungahlin and Charnwood. Edward Crace travelled to Australia in 1865 on the *Duncan Dunbar*. The ship was shipwrecked off the coast of Brazil on the way. After his arrival in Australia, he spent time in Sydney and Toowoomba before making a visit to England. In 1871 Edward married Kate Marion, who had also been travelling on the *Duncan Dunbar*, and they had six daughters and two sons.

Not only was Edward Crace a very successful businessman but he was also an active community member, including being president of the Ginninderra Cricket Club. Tragically, Edward drowned in 1892. The Hilltop Reserve has a memorial honouring Admiral Sir John Crace, the son of Edward and Kate, and the 1,500 Australians who fought under his command in the Battle of the Coral Sea in 1942.

The Crace Community Association has recently been formed and is becoming an active part of the community. The association has been involved in planning and running community events, including street parties and Christmas celebrations. The association is also helping residents to become involved in local activities, including gardening workshops, walking groups, book clubs and playgroups.

The Crace Community Association's next community event is a party at the shops later in the month. The party will include live music, stalls, face painting and other activities for children. It promises to be a wonderful community gathering.

The Crace Community Association includes many enthusiastic residents. The president is David Pollard; the vice president is Jennah Hollowczak; the treasurer is Srihari Embar-Gopinath; the secretary of minutes is Nicky Reading; the community facilitator is Sally Skuse; and members of the committee include Helen Berry, Steve Cross, Sridevi Embar-Gopinath, Chris Mansfield, Gerry Musgrove, John Musgrove, Bill Reid, Karl Schaffarczyh, Nick Sloane, Alan Timmiss, Maudi Timmiss, Andrew Tyler and Nira Tyler.

Like all suburbs, there are things in the suburb which could be even better. Urban maintenance, including weed and grass management, seems to be at the top of the list for many residents that I have spoken to.

Finally, I would like to place on the record my congratulations to the Crace Community Association on all their hard work and their advocacy. I wish them all the best for the party at Crace shops on 28 March. For more information about the association and the suburb of Crace, I recommend members visit their website at [www.cracecommunity.com.au](http://www.cracecommunity.com.au).

### **Citizenship ceremony**

**MRS DUNNE** (Ginninderra) (6.50): One of the more pleasant activities in which we as members of this place are able to participate is to welcome new citizens to our country. A person's decision to give up their citizenship in their home country is a monumental one; it is one that must not be made lightly. A decision to take up citizenship in a new country, often with different cultural, political, economic and religious values and ideals, and very often a different language, is a life-changing one. So to honour and pay respect to the gravity of such a decision is very important.

We do this through a formal ceremony in which new citizens are invited to pledge their allegiance to Australia. Families and friends of new citizens come along to those ceremonies to give their support to their loved ones in the decision that they have made and to celebrate with them as they enter the citizenship of their adopted country.

Typically, the formal ceremony is conducted by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, who administers the statement of allegiance by new citizens, confers on them their Australian citizenship and presents them with their citizenship certificates. These proceedings include a welcome speech, usually by a local member of parliament as a guest speaker for the event. This is a privilege for MLAs, especially those, like me, who come from a diverse ethnic background, and most of us like to take the opportunity to highlight our backgrounds as an example for those who are taking up new citizenship.

However, in times past there have been opportunities for MLAs also to officiate. I noticed that Dr Bourke was able to officiate at the Albert Hall last week, but the opportunities for that seem to be in decline. I did raise the issue a couple of years ago with both the federal minister and the local minister, but, to date, there has not been any real change, and the opportunities for members to officiate are not a common occurrence. I encourage the minister to consider again whether there is scope for other MLAs to officiate at these ceremonies.

A few weeks after a citizenship ceremony, it becomes the pleasure of successive Speakers—and I pay tribute to my predecessor Speaker Berry for initiating this—to welcome new citizens and their families to an informal function in the Assembly. A number of MLAs are regular attendees at these functions. They provide an excellent opportunity for MLAs to connect with their newest constituents and their families.

I encourage the continuing involvement of my Assembly colleagues in these functions. Our new citizens add much value and colour to our life both in Australia and in Canberra itself. New citizens bring with them a diversity of cultures, food, arts and industry. New citizens allow us to show the rest of the world how our cultural diversity can integrate across and within communities. We can show how acceptance of cultural tradition and tolerance of cultural values can bring many communities together to create a community that is dynamic, interesting and exciting. We can show that political and social tolerance and mutual respect for cultural traditions can bring harmony, peace and security for the whole community.

I am always very pleased to welcome new citizens to the community of Canberra, and I appreciate the opportunity to attend ceremonies and host functions in this place. I commend the ongoing new citizenship nights, the next one of which is on Thursday, 2 April, to members.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.54 pm.**