



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

24 MARCH 2015

www.hansard.act.gov.au

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

Rt Hon John Malcolm Fraser AC CH
Motion of condolence

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of the Right Honourable John Malcolm Fraser AC CH, the 22nd Prime Minister of Australia and champion for human rights and social equality, and tenders its profound sympathy to Mr Fraser's family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

Following a rich life, Malcolm Fraser, a true giant of Australian politics, a lifelong humanitarian, passed away in the early hours of the morning of 20 March 2015, aged 84.

Mr Fraser never retired from public life. He kept speaking out, writing, and supporting generations of politicians from all sides of politics until his final days. He had many advantages in his life, and, to his enormous credit, he used them to the greatest effect, for the benefit of all Australians. This is his legacy to Australia.

Malcolm Fraser was born in 1930 in Toorak, Victoria, to a family who held substantial rural holdings. He was educated in Victoria before going to Oxford University, graduating with a degree in philosophy, politics and economics. He returned to work on the family farm before winning the seat of Wannon in the 1955 general election, and at age 25 became the youngest member of federal parliament. He went on to hold the seat of Wannon for 29 years, through 11 elections, until his resignation in 1983.

It is worth noting that during his political career and as a family man, Mr Fraser, his wife, Tamie, and his children, Phoebe, Angela, Hugh and Mark, actively embraced living in Canberra, calling our city home for many years. Mr Fraser educated his children in Canberra schools.

That moment in history in 1975, just seven months after becoming Leader of the Opposition, and after 20 years in politics, when Mr Fraser was asked to take over as caretaker Prime Minister following the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor government, could have forever and completely defined Malcolm Fraser's life and career. It certainly was a defining moment in Australian politics and one that the country will never forget.

But despite his role in the 1975 dismissal, which certainly changed the face of Australian politics, Malcolm Fraser's lifelong commitment to human rights and social equality became his defining legacy, both during and after politics. In government, he played a key role in the passing of Aboriginal land rights in 1976, making his government the first to attempt to legally recognise the Aboriginal system of land ownership.

He was an advocate of immigration as a means of boosting the population, and believed that a multicultural Australia could be an enormous strength to our country. He established immigration policies and forged strong links with migrant and ethnic communities. He was welcoming to Vietnamese refugees and Muslim Lebanese as they fled their war-torn countries. He formed the SBS in 1978 and made changes to the Broadcasting Act to ensure that minority and multicultural communities were receiving correct information. And he led the commonwealth push to end apartheid in South Africa and argued for an independent Zimbabwe. He would not even let the South African Rugby team land in Australia to refuel on the way to New Zealand, so total was his commitment to standing up against institutional discrimination.

Another significant achievement of Mr Fraser's was making three very important changes during the 1977 referendum that included giving the Australian Capital Territory the right to vote in constitutional elections. This has not received much national media interest over the past few days, but it is something that ensured ACT residents were not second-class citizens when it came to constitutional reform.

Another important action for the people of the ACT was his establishment of the Australian Federal Police, which was a combination of the Commonwealth Police, the Australian Capital Territory Police and the Federal Narcotics Bureau. The AFP has served the citizens of the ACT with distinction since that time.

It was Malcolm Fraser's compassion and conviction in his life beyond federal parliament that saw him become a role model for all sides of the political divide. In 1985 he was chosen as a member of an international group of eminent persons seeking to end apartheid in South Africa by encouraging dialogue between all parties. In 1987 Mr Fraser formed CARE Australia as part of the international CARE network of humanitarian aid organisations. The CARE Australia national office was based on Northbourne Avenue, in Braddon, and he was once again a regular visitor to our city. I am told that during this period he would stay at the Rex Hotel, walking down Northbourne Avenue to the office for meetings. He was CARE Australia's chairman from 1987 until 2001, with oversight of the organisation's response to some of the world's worst humanitarian emergencies, including the Iraq war, the Somalia famine, the Bosnian war and the Rwandan genocide. He also served as president of CARE International from 1990 to 1995 and as its vice-president for the next four years.

He continued to be outspoken, in particular about Indigenous issues, refugees, anti-terrorism law and asylum seekers. I know many Canberrans who protested against his accession to the prime ministership in 1975 came proudly to support his principled stands.

In recognition of the legislative record of his government in Indigenous land rights, as well as his personal commitment for all his public and private life to anti-racism, Aboriginal reconciliation and minority rights, Mr Fraser was awarded Australia's Human Rights Medal in 2000 for his contribution to the advancement of human rights in Australia and internationally.

Malcolm Fraser's life was one of achievement, one of principle, and, for one period, intense controversy. That this one moment did not define him is a credit to his ongoing achievements in public life across six decades.

On behalf of my colleagues and the people of the ACT, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the Fraser family and to recognise Malcolm Fraser's significant contribution to our nation.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition): Last Friday it was with sadness that we learned that Australia's 22nd Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, had passed away. I rise today to pay tribute on behalf of the opposition to a great servant of Australia and a true giant of Australian political and public life.

John Malcolm Fraser, who died aged 84, was Prime Minister from November 1975 to March 1983, making him the third longest serving Liberal Prime Minister after Robert Menzies and John Howard. In 1955 he won the western Victorian seat of Wannon in a by-election. He was 25, the then youngest member of federal parliament. He served under Menzies and became army minister in Harold Holt's first ministry. He then rose steadily, being education and science minister twice, and defence minister.

Fraser became Leader of the Opposition in 1975. Certainly no discourse of this period can ignore the dismissal of the Labor government of that time. However, it also cannot be ignored that when the dismissal occurred a general election was immediately called to let the Australian people have their say. They did have their say, and they overwhelmingly endorsed the Fraser Liberal government in both houses of parliament. Malcolm Fraser won the largest majority in Australian political history, with 91 seats in the House of Representatives, while Labor lost 30 seats and half of their caucus. That was no fluke of history. In his second election the coalition lost just five seats.

In all, Fraser won three consecutive elections and he led the country for eight years. From the Labor legacy of high interest rates and high unemployment, he narrowed Australia's deficit, turned inflation around and grew the economy. Malcolm Fraser led Australia out of precarious political and economic times. He was a strong and decisive leader. His focus was on a strong and prosperous Australia.

However, Fraser's full legacy was not just economic. His vision was characterised by diverse and lasting reforms in many fields. As Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser created new opportunities in the post Vietnam War era for those fleeing communism. Believing it was wrong to turn his back on old allies, Fraser made the decision to allow 70,000 Vietnamese refugees to settle in Australia. Eventually 200,000 migrants arrived in Australia from Asia during his three governments.

His first term government's achievements also included establishing the Family Court and the Federal Court and granting self-government to the Northern Territory. His government was the first to attempt to legally recognise the Aboriginal system of land ownership. The Aboriginal land rights act was enacted in the Northern Territory and traditional owners could claim their lands.

His second term as Prime Minister saw the creation of the Special Broadcasting Service, the SBS. An insight into the foresight and political astuteness of Fraser's leadership were his victories in a series of referendum questions in 1977. Only four times in the past 50 years have the Australian people supported changes to the constitution. In 1967 Liberal PM Harold Holt held a successful referendum which recognised Aboriginal Australians. Fraser had three referendum successes. No Prime Minister has had a success since.

In 1977 the Australian Constitution was amended in relation to the filling of casual vacancies in the Senate, and the retirement age of 70 was introduced for federal judges. Importantly, his third victory was to give the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory the right to vote in constitutional elections.

Malcolm Fraser's personal commitment to establishing immigration policies saw his government forge links with migrant and ethnic communities. As a result, in 1979 the government created the Australian Refugee Advisory Council to advise the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs on the settlement of refugees.

Fraser was also an active environmentalist. He declared Kakadu national park in 1979, then Australia's largest national park. It was granted to the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust under the land rights act in August 1978. Fraser then had Kakadu national park inscribed on the World Heritage List. Later, his government protected the world's largest sand island, Fraser Island, from sand mining. Fraser established the first part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and ended whaling in Australia.

In 1978 Australia experienced its first terrorist attack on home soil, at the Sydney Hilton Hotel. This resulted in the Fraser government establishing one federal police body to deal with terrorism and national matters. The Australian Federal Police was a combination of the Commonwealth Police, the Australian Capital Territory Police and the Federal Narcotics Bureau.

In 1983 Malcolm Fraser lost government to Bob Hawke and later that year he retired from political life, aged 52. Forever a servant of the public, Fraser founded CARE Australia in 1987, a charity committed to supporting individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Today, CARE Australia works in 23 countries across the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa, and directly helped more than two million people in 2014 alone.

Malcolm Fraser was the founding chair of CARE Australia and the chair from 1987 to 2001. He was also president of CARE International from 1991 to 1995 and its vice-president for the next four years. He took his role personally and visited CARE emergency operations in Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda and long-term projects in Cambodia, Jordan and Vietnam.

Malcolm Fraser used his influence to mobilise the international community to meet the needs of those affected by humanitarian crises. Many remember him raising the unfolding Rwandan genocide with Nelson Mandela and other African leaders at Mandela's inauguration as president, and he challenged the African leaders to intervene and stop the bloodshed.

Malcolm Fraser's legacy to Australian political life was expansive. In addition to turning the tide of national economic management, Fraser oversaw reforms in immigration policy, media, federal courts, the police force, Indigenous affairs, human rights, territory rights and the environment. His legacy is one of commitment and compassion.

Our thoughts go to his family, his friends, his colleagues and all those many thousands of Australians whose lives were touched by his. Vale Malcolm Fraser.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra): I too rise to pay tribute to Malcolm Fraser. Whilst many focus on his life after federal parliament, I am going to talk about a great decision taken in Aboriginal affairs when he was education minister in 1969.

In the 1960s there were a handful of Aborigines studying at Australian universities. The National Union of Students wanted to provide support and launched a scholarship program for Aboriginal university students called Abschol. They soon realised that this program was not enough and decided to extend it to Indigenous high school students.

Malcolm Fraser, as education minister in the Gorton government, recognised a policy opportunity. They copied the program, renamed it Abstudy, using the powers to legislate for Aboriginal people that the commonwealth had been given in the 1967 referendum two years earlier. Universities also engaged with this policy, providing on-campus support to foster success, founding additional scholarships and establishing special entry programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

By 2010 there were 25,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary graduates, an outcome that would have been difficult to imagine 50 years earlier when there were fewer than a dozen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates in the country. Further good news is that the proportion of Indigenous students in first year medical school is now equivalent to the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian population—a stunning result for what I call the most successful program in Indigenous affairs ever.

The next step is to achieve parity with the proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians with a university degree. Another 100,000 Indigenous graduates are needed. Abstudy continues to build a better Australian society, working to counter the past and present history of discrimination and dispossession, pushing back against the soft bigotry of low expectations and those who are uncomfortable with Indigenous high achievers.

This is a legacy of Malcolm Fraser, and I honour him for it.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo): John Malcolm Fraser was born into a family with a political tradition. His grandfather had been one of Victoria's original senators in 1901. Author Paul Kelly has described Malcolm Fraser as "a rich farmer with a nation-building philosophy, an anti-communist ideologue, an aggressive politician ambitious for himself and his country, and a patrician imbued with a sense of public duty".

He studied at Melbourne Grammar before attending Oxford, where he benefited from the philosophy, politics and economics program. It was at Oxford that he became politicised, learning two enduring lessons—the folly of Britain's pre-war appeasement, and the limitations of post-war British socialism.

In 1954 he won Liberal preselection for the Labor-held seat of Wannan in south-western Victoria. At the 1955 election, at the age of 25, he went on to win the seat, and at 10 subsequent elections. He grew up in parliament, watching Menzies operate and internalising the Menzian agenda built on free enterprise, social progress, home ownership, a strong welfare net, high immigration, national development, ministerial integrity and anti-communism.

It was not until the first Holt government in 1966 that Fraser was rewarded with a cabinet position, becoming Minister for the Army, and later education and science minister. It was during this time that Fraser was a vociferous supporter of full Australian involvement in Vietnam. He presided over the conscription that sent 60,000 young Australian men to the jungles of South-East Asia to fight a proxy war.

Fraser took down his first Prime Minister in 1971, when he resigned from the cabinet and effectively ended John Gorton's political career. His resignation speech has been called "a methodical and public exercise in destruction". It was four years later that Fraser overthrew Bill Snedden in a bitter contest. Whitlam and Fraser then confronted each other in a clash of the titans.

Malcolm Fraser will, of course, always be remembered for the primary role he played in engineering the greatest constitutional crisis that our country has experienced. The 1975 decision to force an election by blocking supply was his ultimate piece of brinkmanship. Paul Kelly goes on to say:

During the crisis, Fraser displayed a remarkable strength and a judgement of Kerr far superior to Whitlam's. He won a record 55 seat majority in the House as well as a Senate majority, yet the Whitlam dismissal undermined Fraser's ability to unite the nation in a fashion implied by such a sweeping mandate.

Fraser gave Indigenous people more control over their traditional lands, set up the multilingual broadcaster SBS and also oversaw the development of a uranium industry in Australia.

Fraser is well known as a father of multiculturalism in Australia, something he often stated was his government's most important legacy. The immigration program had been slashed under Whitlam, and Fraser gradually restored immigration numbers to 120,000 in 1982. Fraser saw multiculturalism as accepting both the legitimacy of ethnic culture and assisting the integration of immigrants into Australia.

At the 1977 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London Fraser publicly railed against policies based on racial superiority as “the most flagrant violation of fundamental human decency”. He backed majority rule in then Rhodesia and took a hard-line stance against South Africa, backing sports boycotts against apartheid. He promoted the independence of Zimbabwe and campaigned for Australia to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Less idealistically, he accepted Suharto’s 1975 military incorporation of East Timor and in 1978 recognised the annexation, viewing the anti-communist strongman through his Cold War lens.

Fraser’s economic policies have been viewed by some commentators as a wasted opportunity. Falsely hailed as a Thatcherite or Reaganite, he was really a disciplinarian upholding the Australian tradition against the rising tide of pro-market reformers. He was the last Prime Minister before the age of globalisation forced Australia to break from its introspective economic past. John Howard has said:

Malcolm Fraser and Doug Anthony were people who acquired their political and economic experience at a time when the old paradigm worked, and understandably they didn’t think a change was necessary.

Malcolm Fraser’s separation from the Liberal Party is well known. He resigned from the party in 2009 upon the election of Tony Abbott as leader, bemoaning their rapacious economics and social conservatism.

In later life he took on a different role in Australian political discourse, most prominently as an outspoken advocate for asylum seekers. As late as last month, Malcolm Fraser was calling on Australia to end its strategic dependence on the United States, he was defending Gillian Triggs against attacks by the Abbott government and he was criticising both Liberal and Labor for their inhumane asylum seeker policies. In 2013 Malcolm Fraser publicly campaigned with South Australian Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young.

He used both traditional and social media to promote his message, and I urge members to stop by his Twitter feed to get a better sense of the man we are eulogising here today.

On behalf of the ACT Greens I would like to express my sincere condolences to his wife, Tamie, his four children, and his broader friends and family.

Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.

Petition

*The following petition was lodged for presentation, by **Mr Doszpot**, from 1,446 residents:*

Transport—public—petition No 2-15

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

This petition of residents, business owners, service providers, shoppers and visitors of Manuka and Kingston shopping centres, Australian Capital Territory, draws to the attention of the Assembly that the shortage of bus transportation services and readily available parking needs to be addressed. This lack of transportation and parking is having a negative impact on the commercial success and enjoyment of these areas and also having a negative impact on the convenience of using these shopping centres.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to provide public transport in the form of a shuttle bus from the Parliamentary Zone to the Manuka and Kingston shopping centre areas. We request the Assembly to provide such public transport from 12 noon to 2.30 pm every day from Monday to Friday (public holidays excepted). This is an initiative of the Manuka Business Association.

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

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo), by leave: I would like to start by acknowledging the Manuka and Kingston traders, members of the Manuka and Kingston business associations, who are here in the gallery today, members who have worked tirelessly over the last few months to collect nearly 1,800 signatures for their petition.

The petition tabled today comes from 1,784 concerned Manuka and Kingston residents. The petition itself has 1,446 signatures in the correct format and an additional 338 signatures. Irrespective of their status, all of the signatures represent the deeply felt concern that people who use the Manuka and Kingston shopping precincts feel about the lack of consultation this government has had with its residents. As the petition states, it comes from:

... residents, business owners, service providers, shoppers and visitors of Manuka and Kingston shopping centres, Australian Capital Territory ...

It draws to the attention of the Assembly:

... that the shortage of bus transportation services and readily available parking needs to be addressed. This lack of transportation and parking is having a negative impact on the commercial success and enjoyment of these areas and also having a negative impact on the convenience of using these shopping centres.

We know that parking is always an issue in Manuka. Since the introduction of pay parking in the parliamentary zone, more and more people are using streets around Manuka and Kingston and walking to work. That means, of course, they are disinclined to lose their parking spots to drive to the shops at lunchtime and the businesses in Manuka and Kingston are feeling this loss of trade greatly.

Add to this the change of bus routes through Manuka and the situation has got worse. Customers are telling traders that since bus routes were changed last year and bus stops relocated, for myriad reasons, it is difficult for some customers, particularly older users of buses, to be able to get easily from the bus stop to the shops they once shopped at and on to a bus route that they are familiar with.

When I raised this in correspondence with Minister Rattenbury last year he told me that under network 14, route 4 was “redesigned” to cover parts of the inner south and it had replaced route 6, which residents tell me they liked because it serviced their needs. Minister Rattenbury went on to suggest that both routes 4 and 5 provide “frequent services to the Manuka shopping precinct”.

That is not the experience of traders in the Manuka and Kingston business district. If it were they would hardly be going to the trouble of circulating this petition and coming to the Assembly today. What they are seeking is the introduction of a lunchtime shuttle service from the parliamentary triangle to Kingston and Manuka shops to make it easier for workers in that area to get to the shops.

Of course, failing to listen to constituents is common practice for this government. It was only last week that Oaks Estate residents were complaining about no buses travelling close to where they lived. They were effectively told that a more than one kilometre walk to the nearest bus should be good enough.

Yarralumla and Oaks Estate residents are both learning that a master planning process and community meetings are not necessarily a two-way information exchange where local views are listened to and taken note of. Those on the proposed light rail route will soon enough get to understand what expedited planning means for them.

I would urge the government to understand the concerns of local business in both Manuka and Kingston and work with them to help them remain viable. That includes access to their businesses by convenient transport and parking options.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 30

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 30, dated 23 March 2015, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 30 contains the committee’s comments on 27 pieces of subordinate legislation, one government response and one regulatory impact statement. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Report 3

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.30): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 3—*Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2013-2014*, dated 24 March 2015, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I present the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety's report on annual reports 2013-14. The committee held hearings on two days and heard from 35 witnesses, including the Attorney-General and his officers; the Minister for Corrections—now the Minister for Justice—and his officers; and the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and his officers.

The committee also heard from statutory officers. Notably, this was the first time the ACT Electoral Commissioner appeared before the committee in annual reports hearings in his new guise as an officer of parliament—an important development, as members will agree.

Madam Speaker, annual reports hearings are, with estimates, part of an important framework of accountability in the ACT. These recurring overviews of government policy, agency actions and expenditure generate a comprehensive picture of what goes on in government. Some issues are more topical and of the moment, but there are also important issues that play out over a long period which are no less significant for the governance of the ACT.

In this instance the committee has made five recommendations, which I will briefly mention. First, the committee recommends that the ACT government publish all submissions to its inquiry into law reform on double jeopardy. This is an important issue which would benefit from a wider awareness of the arguments put to the inquiry.

Second, the committee recommends that the Emergency Services Agency discipline staff found to have been involved in inappropriate behaviour. There appears to be some doubt as to whether this has always taken place and a consistent response is critical to establish effective behavioural norms in the agency.

Third, the committee recommends that if the ACT government proposes to change legislation so as to target outlaw motorcycle gangs, this legislation be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for inquiry and review. There are important balances to be struck for such legislation between the particular purpose of the legislative changes, liberty and the principle of equality before the law.

Fourth, the committee recommends that the ACT government develop a new funding model for statutory agencies and fund agencies accordingly. This arises from the committee hearing, when considering annual reports over successive years, that demands are increasing on statutory agencies but resourcing does not respond. In the committee's view something has to change. This would be better done in a structural way rather than taking an ad hoc approach.

Fifth, the committee recommends that an avenue be created so that the ACT human rights commissioner can accept human rights complaints. It is a little-known fact that such an avenue has never been available, even after the passing of the Human Rights Act 2004. As things stand, a person with a human rights complaint must approach the ACT Supreme Court, which entails considerable cost—more than most could contemplate. This change is necessary if the Human Rights Act is to deliver on its promise and would result in greater justice and fairness in the ACT.

On behalf of our committee, I would like to thank Dr Brian Lloyd, the secretary to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, for his tireless efforts and contribution to the inquiry into annual reports 2013-14.

In closing, I would also like to thank witnesses who appeared before the committee in the course of the inquiry, and my fellow members of the committee, who have included Mr Gentleman and Ms Berry, in addition to my present colleagues on the committee, Dr Bourke, Mrs Jones and Ms Porter. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Report 4

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (10.35): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 4—*Inquiry into Sentencing*, dated 24 March 2015, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

Madam Speaker, I rise in connection with the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety's report on sentencing. As members will be aware, this has been an extensive inquiry with broad terms of reference. The committee received 19 submissions and held four public hearings at which it heard from 23 witnesses, most of them significant figures in the legal fraternity in the ACT. The committee passed the motion defining terms of reference for the inquiry on 1 May 2013. The terms of reference include sections on each part of the criminal justice system; legal frameworks for sentencing; practical matters, such as the administration of bail, parole and restorative justice; and alternative approaches to sentencing practice.

The committee looked into matters right across sentencing in the ACT, from the courts to the Alexander Maconochie Centre, before and after sentencing, and before and after sentences are served. The ACT has had fairly modest rates of offending and a low number of prisoners in custody. However, within that cohort recidivism rates are high and compare poorly with other jurisdictions in Australia. This calls out for a concerted effort by government to reduce recidivism in the ACT.

Two broad areas attracted the committee's attention. The first concerns the establishment of a sentencing council. This responds to what the committee found to be an underdeveloped state of knowledge on sentencing in the ACT and the limited availability of reliable information, including information available to the public. The need for such a body was highlighted in the course of the inquiry by conflicting claims made to the committee on sentencing data and the trends in the ACT.

Challenges in establishing a better state of information on sentencing in the ACT are, in the committee's view, increased by the small size of the jurisdiction, requiring specialist techniques to discover trends and indices in small sample sizes. Such a council would also respond to the gap between the practice of sentencing by the judiciary and the public perceptions of sentencing noted in many jurisdictions in Australia.

The second broad focus of the report's recommendations has been the establishment of an intensive corrections orders regime in the ACT. In the committee's view, the more comprehensive, flexible suite of sentencing options, monitoring and rehabilitation that would be provided under such a scheme would help in a number of areas currently needing attention. This is especially the case in view of the high prevalence of drug and alcohol use amongst offenders in all jurisdictions.

Intensive corrections orders would provide a more appropriate set of options under which offenders in the ACT could be ordered to attend drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs and for this to be monitored and supervised under the auspices of the criminal justice system. Given the strong correlation between substance abuse and offending, the committee believes this is an important direction for criminal justice in the ACT.

In addition to these broad proposals, the committee found there were a number of specific areas in which present arrangements could be improved upon. I will briefly summarise the committee's recommendations in these areas. In relation to court processes, the committee recommended that the government introduce *de novo* appeals, set realistic time lines for lodging appeals after sentence is handed down, allow judicial officers to take account of forfeiture of property when determining sentence, reform listing practices in the Magistrates Court, create alternatives to remand, provide a remedy where costs accrue through no fault of the accused, and expand the scope and operation of the ACT's restorative justice scheme for both youth and adult offenders.

In relation to domestic violence and victims of crime, the committee recommended that the government continue current legislative and other support for the ACT family violence intervention program and empower courts to adjourn sentencing proceedings to allow time for victim impact statements to be provided.

In relation to the rehabilitation of offenders, the committee recommended that the government evaluate on an ongoing basis rehabilitation programs for offenders, allow accused persons on bail and remand access to rehabilitation programs currently only available to sentenced prisoners, and enhance reporting on recidivism in the ACT.

In relation to Indigenous offenders, the committee recommended that the government introduce an explicit statutory requirement for courts to consider the Indigenous status of offenders, create a mechanism similar to Canadian Gladue reports in which the relationship between offending and Indigenous status in particular cases is set out for the information of the court, recognise the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court in statute and expand options for the rehabilitation of Indigenous offenders.

In relation to offenders with drug and alcohol problems, the committee recommended that the government create a drug court in the ACT, introduce a coordinated suite of drug diversion programs, investigate the criminogenic implications of early exposure to drug use, and expand the scope of the ACT community and work order program.

In relation to offenders with mental health problems, the committee recommended that the government increase judicial discretion on questions of defendants' mental capacity and provide appropriate arrangements for sentenced offenders who are primary carers for children.

In relation to youth offenders, the committee recommended that the government create a single point of coordination for services brought to bear in youth and adult criminal justice systems, create an ACT diversion plan for young offenders, and survey the health and wellbeing of children in the youth justice system.

In relation to parole, the committee recommended that the government provide courts with a discretion to cancel parole where a parolee is accused of committing a crime; allow courts, for shorter sentences, to make parole orders at the time of sentence; provide discretion to the Sentence Administration Board as to how much of a sentence should be served where parole is breached; specify in statute circumstances in which parole may be revoked; and provide that the Sentence Administration Board publish its decisions.

In relation to bail, the committee recommended that the government create a single risk-based approach under which courts would consider applications for bail.

These are important proposals which, in the committee's view, would significantly add to the effectiveness and efficiency of sentencing in the ACT if put into practice, and we commend them to members for their consideration.

On behalf of the committee I thank all the contributors to the inquiry, including the Attorney-General and his officers, the Minister for Corrections—now Minister for Justice—and his officers, the ACT Bar Association, the ACT Law Society, the Aboriginal Legal Service, Legal Aid ACT, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, Prisoners Aid, the Human Rights Commission, the Victims of Crime Commissioner, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the official visitors. Also, we thank the ACT

courts and the Alexander Maconochie Centre, where the committee held site visits, and the ACT Law Society for a private briefing on the conduct of criminal cases and sentencing. All of these were very helpful to the committee in our deliberations.

Also on behalf of our committee, I sincerely thank Dr Brian Lloyd, the secretary of the justice and community safety committee, for his tireless efforts and significant contribution to this inquiry. Finally, I thank fellow members of the committee, who over the past 2½ years have included Mr Gentleman and Ms Berry, prior to their promotions to ministerial positions. My sincere thanks to the current membership: Dr Bourke, Mrs Jones and Ms Porter. I have been pleased with our process together, the way we have debated areas of concern and the general conduct of this inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (10.43): I also thank the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety: the chair, Mr Doszpot; Mrs Jones and Ms Porter; former members Mr Gentleman and Ms Berry; and all who contributed to the inquiry over its course. I also thank the secretary, Dr Brian Lloyd, who drew this substantial report together.

As we are aware, Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is unfortunately over-represented in our justice system. As a result, the community or the subset of members involved in the justice system may also benefit from the report, from the recommendations to improve the sentencing system generally and from the recommendations specifically concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Some of the latter include: recommendation 18, that courts be explicitly required to consider the Indigenous status of offenders at sentencing; recommendation 20, calling for the creation of reports to the court on any relationship between the accused's offending and his or her Indigenous status; recommendation 21, that Indigenous case workers have significant input to these reports; and recommendation 22, that the government engage with Canberra's Indigenous community to explore alternative sentencing options and appropriate punishment and rehabilitation choices that may also lower imprisonment rates.

The report is especially supportive of restorative justice, justice reinvestment and the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court. It includes: recommendation 19, to formally recognise the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court under statute; recommendation 52, that the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court's role and purposed be defined under statute and it be funded appropriately; recommendation 53, that the Justice and Community Safety Directorate report on key indicators for the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court in the directorate's annual report; recommendation 54, that the government further develop and fund appropriately the suite of programs to which the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court can refer offenders; and finally, recommendation 55, that the Ngunnawal bush healing farm be completed by December 2017. The report speaks of the benefits to the community of having culturally appropriate prevention and education programs as part of the farm's alcohol and other drugs residential rehabilitation program.

This is a substantial report, and I hope it will form the basis for further action by this government. It offers a more consistent approach to sentencing and support for innovative diversionary options. In the ACT we have a lower crime rate and a lower imprisonment rate than other jurisdictions. Being a smaller jurisdiction, we can be more responsive to change and what can be done to rebuild the lives of offenders and victims. We also have a generally less sensationalist media that can deal with the complexity of issues around crime, punishment and sentencing. I thank the 19 organisations and individuals who presented submissions and the 24 witnesses who appeared before the committee.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (10.47): I rise to add a few comments in relation to the report to those of my colleagues. Firstly, I thank my fellow committee members: chair, Mr Doszpot; deputy chair, Dr Bourke; Mrs Jones; and former members. I also acknowledge the very hard work and diligence of the secretary, Dr Brian Lloyd, in bringing this report together.

As members know, I came latterly to the inquiry, joining the standing committee in August 2014. This inquiry was well underway, and I thank the secretary and members of the committee for their support in getting me up to speed in this important inquiry. I am extremely pleased to be part of a committee that, through its deliberations, has made a number of recommendations in relation to Indigenous justice matters, particularly those in regard to the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court, which Dr Bourke has just mentioned. I refer particularly to recommendation 19. Members can read more about the court on pages 372 and 373, and I recommend that they do so. I also draw members' attention to all the recommendations in this area—18 to 22 and 52 to 55.

I am pleased the committee has agreed to a number of recommendations in relation to restorative justice and diversion, particularly recommendation 34—that the attorney proclaim phase 2 of the Crimes (Restorative Justice) Act 2004. I draw members' attention to recommendations 34, 35 and 46 through to 51 on pages 337 to 371.

I believe this inquiry was extremely important, and I believe all the recommendations are extremely important in building on the very positive work that has already been done in this area. The chair and Dr Bourke have brought many of these recommendations to members' attention today, and I encourage everybody to read this very comprehensive report. I am sure many people, when they read it, will agree that it is extremely positive and extremely comprehensive.

Along with other members, I thank all those who made submissions and appeared before us, and I particularly thank officials at the Magistrates and Supreme courts for hosting the standing committee for the morning, for giving us a tour of the precincts, including the holding cells, and for the very valuable briefing they gave us. They generously gave us much of their time, and I thank each one of the people involved on that day. I again thank everyone involved in preparing this report, and I commend the report to members.

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

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 9

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.50): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 9—Review of Auditor-General's Report No 3 of 2014: *Single Dwelling Development Assessments*, dated 10 March 2015, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to report No 9 of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Review of Auditor-General's report No 3 of 2014: single dwelling development assessments*. The audit report presented the results of the performance audit that examined single-dwelling developments which were subject to development application exemptions and the development application assessment processes in the ACT. In accordance with the resolution of appointment of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the audit report was referred to the committee for examination. The committee has established procedures for the examination of these reports pursuant to the Assembly resolution. In accordance with these procedures, the committee resolved on 15 December 2014 to conclude its consideration of the audit report with a summary report.

The objective of the audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on whether the development application exemption and development application approval processes for single-dwelling developments are open to improper influence. The audit focused on single-dwelling developments. Duplexes and high density residential developments were not considered.

The audit examined several case studies to assess planning processes for single-dwelling developments. The committee said:

The Audit found: (i) that transparency issues around decision making—for example, peer reviews were not always undertaken for developments assessed under the DA merit track process and instances of insufficient documentation to support assessment decisions; (ii) inadequacies were found in the Directorate's safeguards to monitor the decisions of certifiers and mitigate the risk of improper influence; and (iii) issues relating to certifiers were identified in four of the case studies.

The committee report continued:

Importantly, the Audit found:

... no evidence of improper influence being exerted on, or by, the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate's assessing officers, for the seven case studies examined as part of this audit.

Notwithstanding the above, the audit was of the view that the safeguards for mitigating improper influence in the DA exemption and DA merit track assessment process for single dwellings needed to be strengthened in accordance with the recommendations of the audit.

As noted by the audit, an important safeguard found to be absent was the auditing of the decisions made by certifiers as to whether a proposed development qualified as DA exempt. The importance of such safeguards cannot be underestimated in terms of their overall contribution to confidence in the planning system. Again, as noted by the audit report:

Safeguards are important as the ACT's complex planning framework and discretionary decision-making powers provide the opportunity for improper influence to occur.

The audit made 14 recommendations to address the auditor's findings across three audit themes, being case study, certification and development applications. The government agreed to all 14 recommendations.

The committee has carefully considered the progress in relation to agreed recommendations post presentation of the audit report. While most of the 14 recommendations are complete, the committee noted some inconsistencies with regard to reported status. The committee has noted these matters in its report. The committee has made one recommendation regarding a final update on the implementation status of the recommendations by October 2015.

The committee report said, in summary:

Confidence in the planning system is a fundamental requisite in determining the extent to which the System contributes to economic vibrancy, environmental enhancement and well-being of present and future generations.

... whilst the Audit found no evidence of improper influence for the seven cases examined, it found weaknesses concerning safeguards for mitigating improper influence in the DA exemption and DA Merit Track assessment processes. The Audit made 14 recommendations to address these findings.

... The Committee emphasises that the importance of robust safeguards to mitigate risk of improper influence cannot be underestimated in terms of their overall contribution to confidence in the planning system. Accordingly, the Committee is of the view that the Audit has been important in assessing whether planning processes for single dwelling developments may be at risk to improper influence.

I thank the Auditor-General, the Minister for Planning and directorate and agency officials for their time, expertise and cooperation during the course of the inquiry. I conclude by thanking my committee colleagues, Ms Porter, Ms Lawder and Ms Fitzharris, for their efforts and, particularly, thanking the committee secretary, Dr Cullen, for her work. I commend the report to the Assembly. My committee colleagues may also wish to provide some comment.

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) (10.55): I thank Mr Smyth and the committee for their report today. The ACT government has been working hard to implement the recommendations from the Auditor-General; again I thank the Auditor-General for her work in this field and see it as an ideal opportunity for government to continue to improve the way we do business.

On the recommendations, the first one is:

The ... Directorate should modify its eDevelopment application form so that applicants indicate if their development has been assessed under the Development Application exemption process.

EPD has implemented a new check box, included in the DA form, and these DAs will be entered onto a spreadsheet to monitor progress. The field in the DA form will be fully automated in the next release of eDevelopment 2015.

Recommendation 2 is:

The ... Directorate should improve its ability to meet statutory timeframes by not accepting the lodgement of a Development Application whose material is unsuitable for conducting an assessment.

That has been implemented. The practice is in place through the completeness check process.

Recommendation 3 is:

The ... Directorate should implement a process for assessing officers to communicate breaches of legislation to the Investigations Team ...

EPD has implemented that recommendation. A work instruction for the communications process has been created for assessing officers to communicate potential breaches of legislation to an investigations team for their attention.

Recommendation 4 is:

The ... Directorate should identify and promote ways to improve the training of certifiers ...

That is underway. Regular seminars for certifiers are conducted, and the effectiveness of the training requirements under this recommendation will be reviewed by June this year.

Recommendation 5 is:

The ... Directorate should require building surveyors and works assessors ... to submit a minimum level of documentation ...

That is implemented. The Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (No 2) includes provisions to reinforce documentation and decision responsibility requirements for building certifiers, building surveyors and work assessors. The bill was passed by the Assembly in October last year, and the act was notified and commenced on 5 November.

Recommendation 6 is:

The ... Directorate should improve its publicly available information on certifiers and the Development Application exemption assessment process ...

That has been implemented. A new publication entitled *Building in the ACT: a consumer guide to the building process* has been published on the directorate's website. The guide provides information about the Construction Occupations Registrar, development applications, exempt development, building approvals, building certifiers' roles, fees, inspections et cetera, choosing a builder, building contracts, payment arrangements, statutory warranties and residential building insurance, building disputes, and completion processes.

Recommendation 7 is:

The ... Directorate should improve its auditing of Development Application exemption assessments ...

That has been implemented, commencing on 1 July last year. Audits are now being undertaken of exempt development for class 1(a) and associated class 10 buildings that were determined to be exempt from required development approval. The number of audits to be undertaken in the 2014-15 program will be 75. The audit program for exempt development beyond this period will take into account the initial programmed audit findings.

Recommendation 8 is:

The ... Directorate should assess the effectiveness of its new enforcement policy ...

That has been implemented. The enforcement policy is in place and was monitored and reported on by December last year. Ministerial complaints are also encapsulated by EPD's complaints framework to ensure consistency of approach.

Recommendation 9 is:

The ... Directorate should develop an investigations monitoring system ...

That has been implemented. The COMtrac system—investigation and complaints monitoring—is operational. The system has flags and reminders built into it to enable effective tracking of the progress of matters under investigation.

Recommendation 10 is:

The ... Directorate should review and report to the Minister on the merits of ... increasing penalties for a certifier's non-compliance with relevant Acts and codes ...

Increased penalties were implemented as part of the recent interim legislative amendments to the Building Act. This will also be included for assessment in the Building Act review changes for this year.

Recommendation 11 is:

The ... Directorate should develop and implement a peer review quality control process for Development Application Merit Track assessments ...

That has been implemented. A peer review checklist has been created and is required by the standard operating procedures to be implemented in circumstances where the decision-maker is the same as the assessing officer.

Recommendation 12 is:

The ... Directorate should improve the transparency of its decision-making, by requiring that assessing officers document their considerations against key mandatory rules ...

That has been implemented. Key mandatory rules have been identified in a single dwelling assessment report template for assessing officers.

Recommendation 13 is:

The ... Directorate should redesign their 'Controlled Activity' notification letter ...

That has been implemented. The current template letters have been reviewed and the letter that was the subject of the A-G's recommendation, directed to lessees, has been substantially redrafted. It is now included on EPD's Intelledox template system for future use.

The last one, recommendation 14, is:

The ... Directorate should include risks relating to improper influence as part of its current review of its Risk Management Plan ...

That has been implemented. Risks relating to improper influence have been included in the risk management plan along with a timetable for implementation.

I reiterate that I want to thank the Auditor-General for her work and also confirm that she found no evidence of improper influence being exerted on or by the ACT government assessing officers. Audits such as these are a great way for the ACT to learn how to continue to improve the planning system in the ACT. I thank the Auditor-General once again. I thank the committee for its recommendation, and we will respond more fully in the required time frame.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Report 10

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.02): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 10—Review of Auditor-General's Report No 3 of 2013: *ACT Government Parking Operations*, dated 12 March 2015, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I am pleased to speak to report No 10 of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts *Review of the Auditor-General's report No 3 of 2013: ACT government parking operations*. The audit report presented the results of a performance audit that examined the ACT government's parking operations. The audit has focused on paid parking. In accordance with the resolution of the appointment of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the audit report was referred to the committee for examination. The committee has established procedures for its examination of these reports pursuant to the Assembly resolution.

In accordance with these procedures, the committee resolved on 13 November 2014 to conclude its consideration of the audit report with a summary report. The objective of the audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the efficiency and effectiveness of ACT government management and administration of parking operations. The audit involved consideration of planning, management and implementation of parking operations.

The audit was a multi-agency audit covering five separate ACT directorates—that is, the former Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, the former Economic Development Directorate, the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the former Chief Minister's and Treasury Directorate. The audit made 12 recommendations to address the audit findings across three audit themes, those being governance and administrative responsibility; planning and maintaining parking; and fees and infringements. The government agreed to 10 recommendations and in part to the other two. As at September 2014 the government had completed four of the recommendations while the remaining eight are in progress, with varying time frames to completion.

Key actions in progress to address the audit findings include: the release of a draft parking strategy for consultation in 2015; finalisation of a transport pricing strategy setting out how parking pricing relates to public transport pricing for government consideration in late 2014; parking plans for the city centre and town centres to be considered by the government in November 2014; parking demand surveys to be undertaken in the next two years; work to increase parking spaces for people with a disability to at least three per cent of total spaces; and the replacement of over 900 on-street parking meters in 2014-15.

The committee emphasises that it is the action taken by applicable agencies to implement audit recommendations that is all-important in helping achieve better efficiency and to improve the accountability of the government, not the recommendations per se. The committee has considered the progress update for each of the recommendations reflecting their status as of September 2014, as received from the Minister for Planning. The committee notes that work against each of the recommendations has taken place and progress has been achieved, with four complete and others either close to completion or well underway.

The committee is generally satisfied that the lead directorate for the audit report, in this case Environment and Planning, has either addressed or is in the process of addressing those matters identified by the audit as requiring attention. Further, where action is pending, the committee believes the directorate has signalled a credible intention to follow through with implementation.

The committee has made three recommendations. The first calls on the government to report to the Assembly by the last sitting day in October this year on the progress of the implementation of these recommendations. Secondly, the committee recommends that, upon completion of the installation of the new smart parking technology, they evaluate the implementation within 12 months time, with particular reference to smart parking methods that are now functioning in the ACT, and provide a copy of that final evaluation report to the Assembly within three months of its completion.

The committee also, in its third recommendation, recommends that the government ensure all the responsible directorates make sure that the recommendations are appropriately monitored and addressed under the new ACT public service directorate structure so that nothing falls through the gaps.

The committee notes that since the presentation of the audit report three significant aspects relating to pay parking policy and operation have occurred. Firstly, pay parking was introduced in the parliamentary triangle zone. It commenced on 1 October 2014. Secondly, there has now been a rollout of smart parking meter and payment technology across the territory. Thirdly, there has been the designation of a Minister for Roads and Parking.

In summary, the planning, management and implementation of parking operations as a public policy matter affects all citizens in some capacity. The committee is therefore of the view that the audit has been important in assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the government's management and administration of parking operations in the territory.

The committee thanks the Auditor-General, the Minister for Planning and accompanying directorate and agency officials for their time, expertise and cooperation during this inquiry. I also thank my colleagues, Ms Porter, Ms Lawder and Ms Fitzharris, for their work in the committee and the committee secretary, Dr Cullen, for her work, as always. I commend the report to the Assembly. My committee colleagues may also wish to provide comment at this time.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Visitor

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before I call Ms Fitzharris, I would like to recognise Mr Lamont, who has joined us in the gallery. Mr Lamont is a former Deputy Chief Minister of this Assembly. Welcome, Mr Lamont.

Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services— Standing Committee Statement by chair

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (11.09): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A.

I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period—1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014—the standing committee considered eight statutory appointments. For each of these appointments, the committee advised the minister it had no recommendations to make.

In accordance with continuing resolution 5A, I now table a schedule of statutory appointments considered during this reporting period:

Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—8th Assembly—Period 1 July to 30 December 2014.

Annual and financial reports Reference to standing committees—amendment

Motion, by **Dr Bourke**, by leave, agreed to:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 25 September 2014, which referred specified annual and financial reports for the calendar year 2014 and the financial year 2013-2014 to the standing committees, be amended at paragraph (4) after “standing committees are to report to the Assembly by the last sitting day in March 2015” by inserting “except for the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services, which is to report to the Assembly by the first sitting day in May 2015”.

Asbestos—loose-fill insulation Ministerial statement

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.10), by leave: I am pleased today to update members on the work of the asbestos response task force in line with the government’s undertaking to provide regular reporting to the Assembly. As well as reporting on the quarter from October to

December 2014, I will also update members on the recent activity of the task force, including the progress of the buyback program and how home owners are being supported through this process.

I advise the Assembly that future quarterly updates, now that we are moving into another phase of the task force's work—being the demolition of properties and the resale of cleared blocks—will be provided as a reporting document to be tabled to the Assembly rather than by statement. I will, however, continue to provide ministerial statements as necessary on the work of the task force outside of or to complement these written reports.

It has now been nine months since the task force was established to provide a coordinated approach to the management and response of the Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos that has been impacting on our community. In that time a substantial amount of work has been undertaken. This has included: providing advice to the ACT government on this complex social, health, safety, community and regulatory issue; intensive and direct support to home owners; information to the broader community on this issue; creating linkages with community service providers to provide targeted support for home owners, such as the elderly; working with banks, businesses and utilities providers to support affected home owners; working with commonwealth government agencies and ministers around issues such as taxation and social security payments; developing and implementing guidance to support the buyback program as well as asbestos management in the ACT, such as the enactment of the national model asbestos management laws through the Work Health and Safety Act; and also working closely with New South Wales to support their response to this issue.

The last nine months has been a challenging time for home owners and families in the 1,021 houses affected by this significant issue. I acknowledge this and assure home owners that the government and the task force are doing as much as we can reasonably do to support you. In saying this, I am very aware that the buyback program does not meet all home owner expectations. Some of the expectations we cannot meet are due to health and safety reasons, others because of the cost it would cause our community or the equity issues it would create in a response that needs to support all home owners.

An example of a health and safety tension is around home owners seeking to remain in affected houses in the long term or, indeed, in some cases, indefinitely. Unfortunately this cannot occur. The advice from experts and the task force to the ACT government remains that these houses cannot be saved. The asbestos exposure risks cannot be effectively managed in the long term. Demolition is the only enduring solution to this issue, and it remains the government's advice that all affected homes should be vacated. This is why we offered to purchase them all at a value ignoring the presence of loose-fill asbestos on 28 October last year.

Let us come back to why this is the case. Six or even three months ago asbestos fibres were being routinely detected in the living areas of affected homes—in children's bedrooms, in kitchens, in built-in wardrobes, in living rooms. We all know these fibres are not just in the ceiling spaces, walls or subfloors of these houses; they are coming through cracks in cornices, through heating and cooling systems and gaps in wall cavities.

To put this in perspective, in more than 60 per cent of the 1,000 asbestos assessments undertaken to date on these homes, fibres have been detected in living areas. This means that some 600 Canberra families were living with raw amosite asbestos fibres inside their houses. I want to make it very clear that this does not mean the other 40 per cent of homes where fibres have not been found in living areas are safe. We know the fibres are in the ceilings, walls and subfloors, and it is inevitable that these fibres will eventually find their way into the living spaces of these homes. We, as a government and a community, had to act, and we did, even without the support from the commonwealth government that was expected, given the history of this issue. We have done the best we can to respond quickly, fairly and within our means.

We know many home owners want the government to support assisted private demolition of their houses. What this means in practice is for the ACT government to purchase the homes, refund the cost of the demolition and block clearing while home owners keep their land through this program and do not need to repurchase it. I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this option was considered fully by the task force and the government during the development of the buyback program.

It was not progressed for a range of reasons, including broader equity considerations for the 1,021 affected home owners, as it would favour those able to afford to pay for the demolition works upfront as well as temporary accommodation while a property was rebuilt, as well as the overall financial and logistical impacts of the scheme. This included the net impact of the scheme on the territory budget. Even when blocks are resold after remediation to assist in offsetting some of the costs of this program, it will still cost the ACT community at least \$400 million. This is significant and, as analysts have predicted, it will impact our bottom line for years to come after the Mr Fluffy response.

The ACT government considers the buyback program which was announced on 28 October 2014 to be the fairest and most responsible program available to the territory. It is at the edge of affordability for the territory. The buyback program provides home owners with an opportunity to move to another property by providing market value of the affected property ignoring the presence of loose-fill asbestos; a stamp duty waiver to support their purchase of a new home in Canberra; relocation support up to \$14,000 for a family of four; the first right of refusal in repurchasing of the affected block; and land rent provisions for eligible home owners.

To date, 902 of the 1,021 home owners—around 90 per cent—have opted in to the buyback to have their house valued. The valuation process means two independent valuations take place on the house by experienced valuers appointed by the Australian Property Institute of the Australian Capital Territory. The average of these valuations then forms the offer price to the home owner from the territory government.

Offers have ranged from \$360,000 up to \$3 million from the 786 houses having had both valuations undertaken to date. This shows the breadth of properties impacted by this issue, which spans across 58 of our city's suburbs. To date, 609 home owners have accepted an offer for their houses to be purchased by the territory government. This means 60 per cent of home owners are now in the active process of selling their homes through the buyback program, and there is still more than three months until this program closes.

As at today, the ACT government owns 208 houses and is overseeing the security and maintenance of these properties. Comparing this to the October to December quarter last year, 739 home owners had opted in, 151 offers had been made, 56 of these had been accepted and the ACT owned five properties. This shows how busy the last few months has been for the task force. It also illustrates that, while there are, and will always likely remain despite our best efforts, a small number of home owners who remain fundamentally against the buyback program, the majority of home owners are seeing it for what it is—a lifeline to move on to another property in as fair and responsive a way as possible.

With 60 per cent of home owners, and this number is growing every day, taking part in the program, this is why I have said publically on a number of occasions that the buyback program will not be changing, and I reiterate that again today. Also, once the buyback closes on 30 June 2015 there will not be a better offer from the ACT government. I state this to provide certainty for those already in and through the program. I also do not want home owners sitting back and not engaging with the task force as they think pressure will see the program change or that another option from the ACT government will come. It will not, and it cannot for the affordability of the territory and to provide equity and fairness for home owners.

The task force continues to support home owners through this challenging time. This includes the provision of financial assistance, initially as emergency assistance and now the administration of the relocation assistance grant which supports home owners to move to safer accommodation. In the period between 1 October and 31 December 2014 more than \$1.5 million in financial assistance was provided to home owners through 345 payments. Of these, 94 were relocation assistance grant payments. In addition, \$738,000 was spent on 544 asbestos assessments of affected properties. To date, 1,015 asbestos assessments have been undertaken at a cost of \$1.3 million; 764 financial assistance payments have been made to home owners totalling \$4.1 million; and of these 294 have been relocation assistance grant payments.

As well as financial assistance, home owners are being supported through a one-on-one approach by a team of experienced senior personal support team members. The team works to assist home owners through information provision and linking with other service providers and government to ensure they have the support and information to make informed decisions through the buyback program. Each home owner has an assigned case officer to ensure continuity of support so home owners only need to tell their story once. The team work with hundreds of home owners each week. At the start of this year they increased their accessibility by relocating to the suburban centres of Dickson, Woden, Kippax and Tuggeranong to provide greater face-to-face engagement support.

By connecting with providers such as the Belconnen, Woden and Northside community services, the task force is linking home owners to other existing services, providing greater holistic support. Since the community-based task force support was launched, there have been in excess of 270 visits by home owners across these sites. This does not include the visits to the task force's central office in the city or email and phone contacts.

In addition to the work of the personal support team, a dedicated team of six officers operate within Canberra Connect providing information and support to home owners and the broader community. Between October and December of last year this team responded to 1,418 calls relating to Mr Fluffy. In total there have been 4,067 calls through this team since they were stood up as part of the ACT government's response on 25 June 2014. The task force's web page, which was recently refreshed to enhance accessibility, has recorded in excess of 59,000 unique views since it was created, and regular e-newsletters are being sent directly to more than 2,000 people.

The task force is also working hard to support home owners who need extra support, such as the elderly and those with disability. Examples include targeted information provision and working across government, service providers and industry to ensure a comprehensive and connected response.

I wish to particularly highlight the support in place for elderly home owners. The government and the task force are aware of the significant impact this issue is having on senior home owners and are working hard to make any transitions as smooth as possible. Many of these home owners thought they would not need to move houses again in their lifetimes. Others may have put the asbestos insulation in themselves and then went through the original remediation program and, like many, thought their homes would be safe. Others purchased the homes as they aged to move closer to family, friends and services. We know these are real, emotive and considerable issues.

Firstly, it is important to note that home owners, including senior home owners, taking part in the buyback program do not need to leave their houses by 30 June 2015. Whilst for safety reasons the task force's advice to all home owners is to leave quickly—and the buyback program supports this—the government has sought to be as flexible as possible in enabling home owners to stay in their homes in the medium term, being up to five years, to the middle of 2020. This is an option that many of our senior home owners are looking to take.

What this means in practice is that a home owner opts in to the program and two independent free valuations of their property are undertaken. An offer is then made by the ACT government to the home owner to purchase the property, which is, as I have mentioned previously, the average of the two valuations. If the home owner accepts this offer, a longer settlement period can be negotiated, with the home owner receiving the funds at the end of this period.

Home owners staying in their homes past 30 June 2015 will need to have an asbestos management plan and associated actions put in place. This is to support their safety, but importantly the safety of others who may need to visit or work in the homes, such as tradespeople or home care and home service providers. There will be a cost associated with this work for home owners, and the task force will work with senior home owners on ways to alleviate some of these cost pressures where possible.

Other ways the task force is providing targeted support to senior home owners include, but are not limited to, working closely with providers such as the Council on the Ageing, ensuring communications are accessible for senior home owners such as

by providing hard copy and large print resources by post and by hosting specific senior home owner morning teas and forums, three of which have been held to date, the most recent being at the Northside Community Service on 6 March, which included speakers and representatives of the task force, the Department of Human Services, the Real Estate Institute of the ACT, the Community and Expert Reference Group, the Northside Men's Shed, the Council on the Ageing, the Australian Furniture Removers Association, professional organisers, financial services providers and aged-care accommodation representatives.

The task force has also been exploring opportunities for an advocate or partner program where retired public servants or professionals provide support to senior home owners in interpreting and completing paperwork if needed, independent of the task force.

The ACT government has made representations to the federal government around allowing payments from the buyback program to be exempt from the asset tests for social security payments and pensions—this has been implemented—and working with local community services around provision of practical assistance for senior home owners such as packing boxes or providing free supported transportation assistance.

We are all aware of the significant impact that this issue is having, including emotionally, for home owners. The government is continuing its partnership with the ACT Medicare Local, which covers the cost of home owners accessing psychological and emotional support. The government has also continued to examine the health impacts of the Mr Fluffy issue through ACT Health, in partnership with the task force.

In February, jointly with Minister for Health Simon Corbell, I announced a research project to be undertaken by the Australian National University's National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health on potential health impacts that this type of asbestos may have on residents who are living or have lived in these homes. This is important work and was requested by current and former home owners. The government will update members and the community on this multi-year project as it is undertaken.

The task force is also continuing to work with the Community and Expert Reference Group in this important area. Between October and December, the CERG met six times, and has met twice so far this year.

Led by chair Dr Sue Packer, the group includes representatives of affected home owners, community services, unions, industry, business and government. The Community and Expert Reference Group has provided another way for the community to speak to the task force and for the task force to speak to the community. CERG has advised the task force of the general feelings of the affected and impacted community during the development and implementation of the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme and provided advice and support around policy development and support.

While I have updated members at length on the support being provided to home owners and the buyback scheme updates, I would like to take a moment this morning to touch on the considerable policy development that the task force has undertaken in the short time it has been in operation, and to foreshadow some key policy decisions and activity in the next few months.

Work to date has included the passage and enactment of the national model asbestos management laws through the Work Health and Safety Act. This ensures the territory retains its best practice asbestos management regime generally and is able to effectively utilise the national workforce to deliver the scheme.

We have seen the enactment of various laws and regulation amendments to enable the implementation of the buyback scheme, such as: the Tax Administration Amendment Regulation 2014, which allowed the Commissioner for Revenue to provide the personal information of ratepayers to the task force to enable it to write personally to owners of affected homes; the Information Privacy Regulation 2014, which allowed provision of advice as to whether a home is affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation to tenants, former owners and tradespeople who may have worked on a home; the Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2014, which introduced the mandatory notification to WorkSafe of demolition and asbestos removal in Mr Fluffy homes; the Dangerous Substances Amendment Regulation 2014, which allowed for the mandatory tagging of affected homes; and an instrument under the Taxation Administration Act to give effect to stamp duty concessions through the program.

In addition, the bill passed in the Assembly last week provides practical support for affected home owners as well as administrative and regulatory amendments to enable the continued rollout of the buyback and demolition program.

The Dangerous Substances (Loose-fill Asbestos Eradication) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 allows eligible home owners with solar panel arrays which were part of the ACT government's legislated feed-in tariff scheme to transfer tariff arrangements when moving to a new home. This means these householders will not be disadvantaged through having to leave their generator on the premises upon surrendering these premises to the territory. They will be able to retain their 20-year contracts for the premium feed-in rate if they have a generator affixed to their new property.

This is an issue which affects a small number of home owners, but it is one that is very important to those owners and we are pleased to be able to provide this additional support during what is a difficult time.

The bill also provided for a register of affected residential premises to be published. To date the ACT government has respected the wishes of home owners for privacy and has not released a list of affected addresses. Instead, search functions have been established for former tenants, home owners and tradespeople through the Environment and Planning Directorate. Tagging of an affected property's meter box and switchboard as well as mandatory disclosure has assisted in advising tradespeople of the status of a property.

Again, I know this will be confronting for many home owners, but there needs to be a register in place to assist in the full administration and processes of the buyback program. It will also facilitate longer term management of properties where owners choose not to participate in the buyback program.

The bill strengthened the information for prospective buyers so that they are notified on the title of the presence of loose-fill asbestos in a property or at a site. This administrative interest will only exist until a house is demolished and the land is remediated.

The bill introduced special provisions to enable tenants and landlords to terminate a tenancy in order to move to new accommodation or surrender an affected property whilst continuing to provide significant safeguards and relocation assistance for tenants. The bill removed the need for owners of affected units to provide building and pest inspection and energy efficiency rating reports as part of the contract of sale as these would create an additional burden on the seller and cost to the territory and were unnecessary in these circumstances. Several guides and policies have been developed for home owners and industry around working in Mr Fluffy homes, removing contents, fixtures and fittings, and issues such as stamp duty concession provisions.

Finally, in the next few months the task force will continue to be busy as the buyback program draws to a close and the next phase of the task force's activity, being the demolition of affected houses, begins. This will see the focus shift from directly engaging with home owners to engaging with the broader community as we work to educate Canberrans that the demolition works can and will be done safely and efficiently. WorkSafe ACT and ACT Health will continue to be key partners in this work and I thank them very much for their support to date.

Prior to this work commencing, home owners will begin receiving greater detail from the task force around what medium term asbestos management plan requirements will entail for those wanting to stay in their homes post 30 June 2015 to assist them in their decision making. I encourage home owners to continue to work with the task force around their individual circumstances and requirements. The Environment and Planning Directorate will also be undertaking community consultation on the minor proposed amendments to the territory plan which will affect blocks in the RZ1 zones surrendered through the buyback program, to assist in alleviating some of the cost pressure to the territory through the scheme.

The government will be seeking support of members around seeing this important variation through the Assembly. Whilst the work of the task force is far from complete, I would like to thank the officers of the task force for their ongoing commitment and the professionalism they have shown in their work and in their support to home owners and the community. The role they are undertaking is difficult, not only in a policy sense but also socially, with very high levels of emotion present due to the nature of the issue. I am sure all members in this place will support me in their appreciation of the efforts of the task force. I look forward to continuing to update the Assembly on the ACT government's response to this important issue. I present the following paper:

Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos—Update on the ACT Government response to the issue—Ministerial statement, 24 March 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.40): I thank the Chief Minister for his update on the progress of what I would agree is a very difficult and complex area of public policy. We have supported the government's legislation that they have brought before this place, and on this issue we have worked cooperatively to make sure that there is a substantive remediation package and a substantive policy program put out there to get rid of the Mr Fluffy legacy once and for all.

It is particularly complex and particularly difficult for the individuals involved. I am sure that all of us at various stages have had conversations with Mr Fluffy home owners. Each situation is unique but many of them carry with them very similar stories, be it people who have been in their homes for decades, who maybe have just completed a renovation and face significant capital loss, or be it young families who have just moved into a home weeks before finding out that it was a Mr Fluffy home. These are traumatic stories and for the individuals concerned it is very difficult.

We agree with much of what the government has done—in fact, with much of what the government has done over the number of months since it was decided action must be taken, there have been initiatives put forward by the Canberra Liberals. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you would be intimately aware, from the public accounts committee, the evidence that was presented there and the stories that many of us heard from Mr Fluffy home owners, there is a need for the program that has been designed by the government to be more fair and flexible.

Although the Chief Minister said in his update that many people have joined on to the scheme, and intimated that therefore it is an acceptance that this is a good program and they are happy with it, let me assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that is not the case. I have spoken to many home owners who have joined the government scheme because they feel they have no option. In their words, they feel there is a gun to their head and they must sign on or they risk losing everything.

What looms large for many of these individuals is the fear that if they do not sign on to the scheme then on 1 July or on a date soon after there will be a knock on their door from someone in the government condemning their property, under whichever act it is—the Public Health Act or another one.

It is not true to say that simply because people are signing on they are content, are happy or believe that the government's scheme is sufficiently fair or flexible. It is simply that they do not have a choice. What I would ask the government to do is to confirm, and provide clarity on, what happens to those individuals who do not sign on, because there is this looming threat. The government has said that all the houses will be demolished. The government has said that this will not be left for another generation. But what does that mean? The implied threat is that there will be that

knock on the door, people will have their homes condemned and they will possibly be evicted.

Under those circumstances people are press-ganged into joining the government scheme. It is unfortunate, and illustrative that a number of people, despite that threat, are saying, “No, we are not going to be pressured by this government. We are not going to be press-ganged.”

The other significant issue that I think is worth some discussion is this date by which people will be allowed to stay on. The government said five years, and that is not new. The question still remains. It was put forward initially as a 10-year program, but the government is saying that people have to be out within five years, so what has happened to that missing five years, at the outset?

For people who have been in their homes for many years, who are elderly, who have not contracted any disease as a result of the amosite asbestos in their homes, why is there this arbitrary date of 2020? This is the question that they repeatedly ask me: “Why is it that we must be evicted from our home that we have lived in for many years by this arbitrary date? We are suffering no ill effect from asbestos.” This is the point that they make, Madam Deputy Speaker: particularly for those people who are elderly, it is likely that they will pass from other ailments or just simply old age before amosite asbestos affects them. The trauma of those people being essentially forced out of their homes, whether they sign on to the scheme or not, will be far worse and have a far more damaging effect on those individuals, potentially, than any threat from asbestosis or mesothelioma.

The question remains: why is the government going to the homes of people that have been there for decades, where they have had no ill effect from asbestosis and are saying, “We want to stay in these houses. We want to stay in our homes,” and saying, “That is not an option. We are going to evict you”? That is the consequence of this program and the looming threat from the government.

The consequence for those people in their 70s, 80s or 90s, as they get forced out of those homes that many of them have lived in for almost all of their lives, is: where do they go? For many of them, essentially they are rendered homeless and now are looking for somewhere else to live. And they will be displaced from their communities. Even those elderly people who are prepared to rent or to stay somewhere else for the intervening period—a year, two years, three years or whatever it is that it takes to demolish the home and clear it—will not be in a position to buy back that land because it will be too expensive for them to do so. Even if they were to find the extra money to buy back that property, they are going to be asked in their 80s to rebuild a property on that block.

It is an unrealistic scenario and an unfair scenario, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know that you and other members across the chamber have heard these stories. They agreed with the situation and put that into the public accounts committee report. We still do not have a satisfactory explanation from the government as to why this government wants to go to elderly people, the most vulnerable people in our community in many cases, and force them out of their homes unnecessarily. It is cruel, it is punitive and it is certainly not fair or flexible, as this government purports it to be.

I urge this government to listen to the elderly, to listen to the people who are the victims of Mr Fluffy, and not to have this one-size-fits-all approach but to provide the flexibility that is needed. I say, particularly with respect to the elderly, particularly with respect to those who have been in their homes for so long: do not be cruel; be compassionate.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Children and Youth Services Ministerial Advisory Council Ministerial statement

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) (11.48), by leave: As the Minister for Children and Young People, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Assembly today about the interim Children and Youth Services Ministerial Advisory Council. I spoke to the Assembly in February about “A step up for our kids”, the government’s new five-year strategy to reform out of home care services in the ACT.

At the heart of this strategy is a simple aim, which is to give children in care better lives. We are investing in a range of new services for vulnerable children and young people to give children in care the most stable, productive lives possible and putting their needs at the centre. This additional investment of \$16 million will transform our support for this community’s most vulnerable children and young people. There are many initiatives with “A step up for our kids”, including creating a continuum of care; providing training to carers and professionals to better take into account the trauma children and young people have endured; and placing more of an emphasis on securing a permanent home for a child or young person.

We want to improve the education, health, employment and social outcomes of children and young people in out of home care. By doing this we will address the major challenges faced by out of home care services, create a more sustainable system and most importantly help children and young people take a step up in their lives.

In July last year I agreed to a reform of the functions of the Children and Youth Services Council, a statutory body established under the Children and Young People Act 2008. Today I can inform the Assembly about the interim Children and Youth Services Ministerial Advisory Council, which has been established to oversee this major reform process designed to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage in the ACT.

The interim council will provide me with expert strategic advice with a particular focus on the implementation of “A step up for our kids” as the key initiative relating to the operation of the Children and Young People Act 2008. The interim council will perform an important governance function for implementation of the strategy by monitoring progress and reviewing information provided by the Community Services Directorate, considering presentations made by key representatives in delivery of strategy and meeting with key stakeholders.

This governance function is part of the broader reform to strengthen accountability and to ensure a high-functioning care system for the ACT. Further initiatives under “A step up for our kids” will include legislative amendments, development of a regulatory framework, adoption of national out of home care standards, performance-based contracting, and establishment of independent advocacy services for both birth parents and carers.

The interim council will be chaired by Ms Bev Orr OAM, one of Australia’s leading foster care advocates. Ms Orr brings to this position more than 40 years of experience working with children and also with young people and families, including as a longstanding executive of the Australian Foster Care Association and Families Australia. The interim council comprises an experienced membership with a wealth of expertise in child protection, the out of home care system, trauma and attachment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and public policy and administration.

I would like to welcome Ms Bev Orr, Ms Michele Abel, Ms Annette Jackson, Dr Ray Lovett and Dr Catherine Sansum to the interim council. I also welcome ex-officio members Mrs Sue Chapman, Deputy Director-General of the Community Services Directorate, and Dr Mark Collis, Executive Director of the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support. These members not only provide a high degree of professional expertise but bring with them a comprehensive understanding of both the significant changes required of the service system and, most importantly, that the voice of the child is central to everything that we do.

Members of the council will convene on a quarterly basis, with the first meeting to be held in April this year. I look forward to working with the interim Children and Youth Services Ministerial Advisory Council on this groundbreaking initiative as we step up for ACT’s most vulnerable children and young people.

I present the following paper:

Interim Children and Youth Services Ministerial Advisory Council—Ministerial statement, 24 March 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Disability services Ministerial statement

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (11.54), by leave: The ACT government is committed to implementing the national disability insurance scheme for people with a disability,

their families and carers. The government here is investing in and supporting individuals and organisations to create a diverse, effective and sustainable local disability sector to give people with a disability more choice and control. The ACT's local disability sector is diverse, strong and valued by our community. There are many services in the ACT that have deep connections across the community and they are the foundation to the services that are offered today.

Koomarri, for example, has operated in the ACT for over 50 years. It has evolved over the years and adapted to the changing landscape, providing opportunities for people with a disability to develop social networks and supports that enable them to take part in community life, employment and supported accommodation. Hartley LifeCare, a highly respected and essential service, was established in the 1960s to provide long-term accommodation for Canberrans with physical disabilities. It provides year-round 24-hour specialised and centre-based accommodation. Sharing Places has been operating in Canberra for over 25 years, providing essential community-based support.

There are other organisations that are also reshaping. DUO was established last year when Tandem and Home Help Service ACT merged. The organisations came together to strengthen their operations and to fulfil their missions of supporting people with a disability who are socially isolated from their community. Most recently, Citizens Advice Bureau ACT and Volunteering ACT merged to become Volunteering and Contact ACT, a service that provides free, confidential and impartial information, referral and support to the ACT community.

The ACT government is looking to the future and is working collaboratively with the local disability sector to strengthen its sustainability and its diversity. The local disability sector will become the central providers of specialist disability and therapy services and early intervention services. We did this to help maximise the potential of the NDIS and the principles it is built on—principles such as choice and control. That is why the ACT government is committed to diversifying the market, so that we can provide choice and control for people with disability.

The NDIS trial was launched in the ACT in July of last year. The ACT government is investing in the community sector development program to support the local disability sector to mature. We continue to work with the local disability sector to ensure that participants and providers are well placed to transition and thrive in the NDIS environment.

The commonwealth and ACT governments are investing \$21.8 million to prepare the ACT sector and people with disability for the NDIS. There is \$9.3 million for enhanced services in the ACT, including \$7.7 million for the enhanced service offer grants, which are now completed, and \$12.5 million from the national sector development fund for services here in the ACT.

Sector development funding will strengthen the ACT community to ensure that it is ready for the NDIS. It includes \$500,000 that was initially invested to build the capacity of ACT residents with disability to gain maximum benefit from their engagement with the NDIS. The projects funded through this allocation focused on people with a disability, including people with a psychosocial disability. This includes

mental health projects in supported decision making, connecting communities and developing a peer workforce.

Other initiatives included community conversations, family leadership and capacity building, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In December 2013, the commonwealth agreed to \$4 million for new readiness activities and tools tailored to both government and community service providers. This work included the NDIS organisational readiness toolkit, which is helping services consider their preparedness for the NDIS.

Governance and financial management packages of up to \$20,000 each were provided, 25 of which have been allocated so far at a total cost of \$500,000. There were business investment packages of up to \$50,000 each, 20 of which have been allocated so far at a cost of \$1 million. Funding for Gugan Gulwan to employ an Aboriginal outreach worker to support members of the community to prepare for the NDIS and to link in to the National Disability Insurance Agency was also provided.

In 2015 there will be new investments worth \$6.3 million going into our disability sector. This investment will involve more capacity building initiatives for people with a disability and their families and grants to support the disability organisations' transition to the NDIS. The government has just announced new NDIS community conference and seminar grants to help people with a disability to be ready for the NDIS.

These grants offer people with disability and their families grants of up to \$1,000 so that they are able to participate in conferences, workshops, or learning or training events related to the NDIS or to engage a facilitator to help them develop or work towards their life goals and plans for the future.

The grants also offer organisations sponsorship opportunity of up to \$10,000 to deliver NDIS-related conferences and events. As part of this first tranche of funding, a tender process was advertised on 28 February 2015 for a provider to facilitate workshops to build the capacity of people with a disability to engage with the NDIS and to plan a good life. The tender was valued at \$800,000. It will have targeted strategies to work with people with all needs, including those with psychosocial disabilities.

The work is expected to be underway in May of this year. This funding will also support another round of business investment packages to support organisations as they transition to the NDIS. The new round of grants will be more flexible with different levels of funding available to suit all organisations, no matter what they want to achieve.

The ACT government continues to work with the National Disability Insurance Agency throughout the transition as we move through to the NDIS. The government, on behalf of the commonwealth, facilitated targeted consultations earlier this month on the policy framework for NDIS information, linkage and capacity building. The NDIS information, linkage and capacity building services are about ensuring that people with a disability are empowered, informed, and live the life they want and have the capacity to lead and control the supports they need, when they need them.

The government is working with the National Disability Insurance Agency to ensure that the information, linkage and capacity building services in the ACT build on the existing service infrastructure to deliver comprehensive, flexible responses that are embedded in the community. The NDIA expects to provide jurisdictions with feedback on the information, linkage and capacity building consultations across Australia at the April Disability Reform Council meeting.

In 2013-14, 25 providers were independently reviewed to assist in their preparation for the NDIS. As part of these reviews, RSM Bird Cameron developed a “health check” that identified organisational areas requiring further development in preparation for the NDIS. The health check found that 90 per cent of organisations appeared to be in a sound condition to adapt practices required for NDIS.

RSM Bird Cameron put forward some recommendations to 19 of those organisations and Disability ACT is supporting them to implement those recommendations. Last year, the government rolled forward service funding agreements with over 60 organisations. Through a collaborative approach, the contracts were renegotiated with the view to support organisations through this transition. The agreements were designed with a financial step down as more people phase into the NDIS. For some organisations the payment timetable was also adjusted to allow them to manage their cash flow issues.

To further support the sector, the ACT government has established a block funded transition working group. This working group was established in response to delays for people with a disability phasing into the NDIS and will develop a transparent and responsive process to further assist organisations that are experiencing short-term cash issues.

The government remain committed to the local disability sector and will continue to support the organisations as they transition to the NDIS. Madam Speaker, we have a track record of working with, supporting and valuing the disability sector. As we transition over the two-year period to the NDIS, it will be critical that we continue that support and valuing of such fine organisations here in the ACT.

I present the following paper:

ACT Government supporting a strong local disability sector—Ministerial statement, 24 March 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

University of Canberra Amendment Bill 2015

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

That this Bill be agreed to in principle.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (12.04): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Question put:

That **Mr Coe's** motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7		Noes 8	
Mr Coe	Ms Lawder	Mr Barr	Mr Corbell
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (12.08): Madam Speaker, the opposition have serious concerns about the University of Canberra Amendment Bill 2015. The government claims that this bill is a higher education bill which deals with governance at the University of Canberra. However, this bill is really about planning and development. It is about the potential for UC to sell off land or, as stipulated in the bill, to exploit land. The Canberra Liberals will be opposing parts of this bill.

The bill includes amendments to the governance of the University of Canberra. These amendments alter the remuneration arrangements for council members. This means that the council may pass a two-thirds resolution to provide remuneration to a council member. At present, remuneration can only be set by the Remuneration Tribunal. This amendment means that the council will have the authority to provide additional remuneration if it is required to attract appropriate council members.

The bill also includes a provision to allow for a casual vacancy in the council to be filled. Provisions to allow the council to terminate the term of the chancellor or deputy chancellor by a special resolution are also included in the bill.

Finally, the bill expands the values of the University of Canberra to include a “commitment, through education and research, to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people”.

The Canberra Liberals will be supporting the governance changes included in this bill. However, I would now like to turn to the more troubling parts of this proposed piece of legislation.

The bill makes significant changes to the application of planning laws to the University of Canberra. It extends the functions of the university to include the development of cultural, sporting, professional, technical and vocational services. More controversially, the bill includes an additional function which is to

“commercially exploit or develop” university property. It also includes provisions to give the university the power to enter into contracts for the purpose of commercially exploiting or developing property.

What does it mean to “exploit” university property? I think the government has unintentionally revealed its intentions in this provision. The bill is not really about helping UC remain competitive or securing its future. It is about exploiting the property for the government’s benefit. This bill is about bypassing the proper planning processes yet again—the very processes which all other builders and developers must comply with.

The government has informed the opposition that it intends to bring a further bill to allow for unit titling on University of Canberra property. It also intends to bring a territory plan variation. The government has not been up-front about what will be included in the subsequent bill and the territory plan variation. In fact, when Mr Smyth and I asked questions, we were told that the future plans for the site were not really relevant to this bill. Unfortunately for the opposition, we have grave doubts. Information about the intended use of the site is vital to consideration for this bill.

Traditionally, university land has been seen as a community resource, not property to be exploited by the government. If the intended use of the land is to be changed, the community will want to know what it is going to be used for. It is not enough to say that the university has a five-year master plan. We all know that plans change. The government have become expert at changing plans and not delivering upon what they have said. Before members can decide to give all the power included in this bill to the university, we should know what the power will be used for.

The government has informed the opposition that the provisions of the next bill and the territory plan variation have not yet been finalised. If this is the case, the government should delay the planning aspects of this bill until the details of the bill and variation have been decided. Why are the government so keen to make these planning changes before the details are made public? What are they trying to hide, Madam Speaker?

Once again, we have a situation where the government is being tricky with planning. For whatever reason, they do not like the current planning processes so they have decided to bypass them. The government have been unable to provide any details or assurances about the application of planning provisions and the normal rates and charges associated with developments elsewhere in the ACT. Or maybe I should say that they have been unwilling. Any questions the opposition has asked about the potential future development have not been answered because the government say they are irrelevant and the plans have not been decided. This is not true. The government have not worked out the details because either there are no details to work out or they simply do not want to tell the community.

The government is potentially going to give UC the power to do whatever it wants. I think we will find that some of those difficult questions that the opposition has asked will be answered very simply when the details come out. It is just a shame they are not coming out now, Madam Speaker. Things like the lease variation charge and rates

perhaps will not apply to the University of Canberra. The government will be taking every advantage to exploit the property and this will mean that charges which are a disincentive to development elsewhere in Canberra will not apply on this site.

The government claims that the planning system is important. However, anyone who has paid attention to the government's actions in the planning space will know that this is simply not true at present. The government does not see the planning system as very important at all. It sees the planning system as a nuisance for its own projects and essential for everybody else's. When the planning processes get in the way of its pet projects, it simply legislates to bypass the system.

The list of examples is becoming extremely long. In the last couple of years alone we have seen the project facilitation bill, which the government abandoned. Then there was the Symonston mental health facility, which was necessary because the government could not be bothered to go through the normal planning processes for several years and then realised that the project was so far behind that the only way they could make it happen was to bypass the planning process. However, even when that legislation was passed they did not act on their powers. In actual fact, had they put in a normal DA at the time it could have been approved; therefore the legislation was not necessary at all. Who can forget the capital metro bill? The government knows that Mr Corbell's tram will never be built unless it bypasses the proper planning processes. And as Mr Smyth has diligently reminded me, the mother of all bypassing of planning processes is the Mr Fluffy issue. We are yet to see all the details of what it will mean for neighbourhoods across the ACT.

The government is making a habit of ignoring proper planning processes. Instead of working within the rules like everybody else must, the government thinks it is above the law. The government thinks its projects are so important that they should be exempt from scrutiny and the rigours of proper planning processes. Instead, the government simply says, "Trust us. Give us the power. We know what this city needs. The laws are getting in the way of our vision, but don't worry; we are the government so we can bypass all the rules." This is arrogant, Madam Speaker. The government has totally lost touch with reality because it thinks that its projects are above the law.

The truth is that the development of land at the University of Canberra for residential or commercial purposes risks seriously undermining the planning and property regime in Canberra. If a massive parcel of land is not subject to the same rules as adjacent blocks held in private hands it will discourage risk taking and potentially devalue property at or around the site. We may have a situation where land at the University of Canberra is not subject to genuine market valuations, not subject to lease variation charges, not subject to rates and not subject to land tax. This is a real concern and risks undermining investment in the ACT.

I would also like to comment on the processes used by the government to get to this point. The bill was introduced to the Assembly on 19 February. That very day a briefing request was made to the government by the opposition. The opposition was keen to find out about the bill as soon as possible. However, as has become the government's usual practice, the briefing was not provided. In fact, it was only after a further request last Wednesday, a month after the initial request, that a briefing was

organised. The briefing took place yesterday. It is extremely unfortunate that such insignificant time for the opposition to properly scrutinise this bill was given. If the government believes this bill is so important for the future of the University of Canberra, and indeed Canberra as a whole, surely it could have provided a briefing to the opposition before yesterday.

The opposition have serious concerns about the planning provisions included in this bill. We are concerned about the way the government has tried to ram them through the Assembly without proper scrutiny. We are also concerned about the consequences of the broad powers the bill gives to the University of Canberra. For this reason, the Canberra Liberals will be opposing the planning aspects of the bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (12.18): The bill before us today effectively creates a greater range of economic opportunities for the University of Canberra, broadening its revenue base and reducing its future dependence on government funding and support. It is designed to “set them free” in many regards and is mostly driven by a general consensus view that the higher education sector is changing too rapidly to sit still or take a gently, gently approach. We need to take bold action now to prepare for the continuing slings and arrows of political fortune as the Abbott federal government and the minister for education, Christopher Pyne, wildly throw university funding around like a plaything.

All of the issues raised in the bill, and the public debate around higher education, unfortunately lead directly to a frankly shambolic federal government. The recent performance of the federal education minister in seeking to use the jobs and livelihoods of scientific researchers as a threat against the Senate’s vote on the deregulation of universities was a new low in this debate. It is high time the debate gets reset and a more steady and sensible policy agenda is produced.

The ACT Greens are broadly supportive of both the current vice-chancellor’s vision for the University of Canberra and the legislation before us. I will be supporting the bill as it stands, but I would also like to put on the record that we will continue to watch with interest the subsequent legislation, developments and changes this brings. The education sector’s role in the social and economic life of Canberra is too important to just “set and forget”. I believe the Assembly needs to maintain a close relationship with students, stakeholders and the community over the coming months and years so that we can closely monitor the implications of this legislation and also the subsequent legislation that will follow behind it.

Let me turn to some of the specific clauses in the bill.

Clause 4 of the amendment broadens the scope of the UC legislated functions in section 6 of the existing act to allow for the development and provision of cultural, sporting, professional, technical and vocational services to the community, and to participate in public discourse.

Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the need to be so clear in regard to that last part. In recent weeks, we have had some deeply concerning reports in the media of remarks made by members of the federal government to academics of the

University of Tasmania who apparently had the temerity to openly discuss their unease about higher education funding. The Greens strongly believe that elected representatives and responsible governments should never feel that they have the ability to threaten the freedom of speech of groups they fund or support because they do not like what they say. That is, frankly, Orwellian. Our universities should be places of debate and public discourse regardless of who is in government.

Section 6(2) of the current act, which will be retained, is key to understanding the motivations of the ACT government in bringing these amendments to the Assembly today. This line states clearly that in the exercise of its functions the university must pay special attention to the needs of the ACT and the surrounding regions. This must be our foundation going forward and will be at the forefront of my thinking during the term of this Assembly.

Clause 5 raises some questions for me and will need careful thought and consultation as its practical applications begin to take shape. The university's land is still within the ACT borders and therefore must still be accountable to ACT laws. Exploitation is perhaps an unfortunate, although legally correct, term to allow the UC to really embrace its strategic vision, provide incentives for ongoing research to consider commercial application and the like, but it is a term that can raise an eyebrow when it is used in this context. I would like to identify early on that this is another area that the ACT Greens will continue to monitor, as land is a precious commodity in the ACT and we must be strategic and community-minded in its use.

Clause 6 is a positive and concrete commitment to what I know is already solid practice at the university and relates to ongoing reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I trust that this commitment will continue to grow and deepen.

Clause 7 means that the university will have the power to enter into contracts with third parties in order to commercially exploit and develop its property for the university's benefit. While this is of obvious benefit to the university as it seeks to undertake ambitious co-investment models and provides greater certainty to those anticipated investors, I believe there is still a public benefit consideration that may need further articulation. The ACT government operates its business under an ethical investment framework, and while the UC will be acting as a "natural person" in many regards from here on in, it is still a body that has legislative ties with the ACT government. I will be looking to future pieces of legislation to see how we can define requirements for the university to screen some of its investment opportunities and consider who it co-invests with so that they are consistent with the values of the residents of the ACT.

Clauses 10 through 15 support a more flexible approach to the university council and its functions and remuneration. This has clear parallels with recently debated CIT amendments, aside from specific mentions of the vice-chancellor and deputy vice-chancellor. I would agree with the explanatory statement that this amendment is intended to enhance the council's ability to attract and retain qualified and experienced individuals for council positions who would be helping to steer the course of the UC in the years ahead and thus ultimately strengthen the governance of the university.

Clause 16 is an important touchstone for the government in progressing these quite bold amendments, as it legislates a review point five years from now. The review will not only provide the Assembly with scope to consider the amendments to the University of Canberra Amendment Bill 2015 that we are debating today but also allow for us to review any other changes to territory law prescribed by regulation that may flow out of this work in the coming months and years.

As I have said, I support the general direction of the bill and I appreciate the vision Vice-Chancellor Parker is working towards, but that vision must be a shared vision with the rest of the community, and the Assembly needs clear opportunities to scrutinise and test that vision.

I was concerned to hear Mr Coe's comments today about the late briefing received by the Canberra Liberals. My usual experience is that the Canberra Liberals seek their briefings very late and consider matters at the last moment. I often come to the chamber not knowing which way they will vote. But I am concerned if that is the case, and I hope that it is not a practice that will develop in the future. I would certainly be deeply concerned if that was a practice that did continue. I hope that it was an administrative oversight rather than a deliberate situation.

In closing, let me say that the ACT Greens will be supporting this bill today and look forward to ongoing conversations, briefings and public consultations as the university embarks on what is sure to be of benefit to the ACT if it is handled well and done in a spirit that is about benefitting the territory as a whole.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (12.26): The bill is an interesting bill and the timing is very interesting. My office did ask for a briefing on the day it was tabled, given the importance of it; it is unfortunate that that was not seen through.

The problem with this bill is that it is not really a higher education bill. The elements in it that relate to higher education are fine, and we will be supporting those. But at best it is a planning bill in disguise. It is a shame that the government's intention has not been clear.

I have to say that the irony of having a matter of public importance on the notice paper later today called "The importance of investor confidence in the ACT" is not lost on those on this side of the chamber. If you are an investor in Belconnen, you had purchased land to build apartments or units, you had looked at the government's forward plan and you did not happen to see the UC on the horizon, you would have made investments based on the position that the government put, and your confidence would be shattered in knowing that 7,000 or 8,000 units may just suddenly appear.

We asked questions yesterday to find out what the terms and conditions of those apartments would be—only to be told, "It is not relevant to this bill." That is the shame of what we are debating today. If Mr Rattenbury actually believed what he just said, he would have helped to adjourn this bill so that we could get the detail.

The bill does say that this allows the University of Canberra to commercially exploit its land—"commercially exploit". They are interesting words. If you really want

investor confidence in the ACT, if you really want the university to go ahead and if you want everyone in our community to benefit, this is not the way to go about it.

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 12.28 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Hospitals—waiting times

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in 2004-05 and 2005-06, when you were last Minister for Health, the Canberra Hospital's emergency department had the worst record for seeing patients on time in the country. In 2013-14 Canberra's emergency waiting times were the second worst in Australia. The latest quarterly report, released on 19 March, shows that the ED waiting times were, overall, worse than last year and patients wait longer than the year before. Minister, why have we had the longest waiting times for ED in the country for over a decade?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. As the previous Minister for Health has explained in this place on many occasions, and which I can only reiterate, when it is compared with the operation of its peer hospitals, similar sized hospitals like John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle, we know that our emergency department is performing largely consistently with those peer hospitals.

As the former Minister for Health has said, there are reasons why a small jurisdiction with only one tertiary treatment hospital is unlike the larger network that exists in New South Wales. Where some emergency departments, such as in country and regional areas, are not particularly busy and others in larger metropolitan areas are extremely busy, it tends to even out the performance of jurisdictions when it comes to their reporting on this measure.

In this case, we know that the ACT, due to its size and scale, is in a fairly unique set of circumstances. The most recent report, to which the Leader of the Opposition refers, highlights that there was also a five per cent increase in admissions at the emergency department for the quarter reported compared to the previous 12-month period. So we know very clearly that we continue to see significant increases in demand.

As minister, I am very focused on ensuring that we continue to make investments to improve the capacity of our emergency department. That is why, in the coming months, work will commence on the expansion of the emergency department at the Canberra Hospital. This is part of this Labor government's commitment to increase capacity, to employ more nurses and doctors in our emergency department and build more beds in our emergency department. That is a multimillion dollar project committed to by this government, which is on track. Members will see those works commence in the coming months.

We remain very focused on improving service delivery. I made that a priority when I became health minister late last year. It remains a priority for me. That is why we are focused on extra beds, extra doctors and nurses and extra capacity to meet this unprecedented increase in demand—a five per cent increase in the most recent quarter, compared to the previous reporting period.

Those are the circumstances. Like the previous minister, I as the current minister will continue to restate the context in which our hospitals perform and how comparisons with other measures need to have regard to those facts.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, if the ACT is so unique, why did we have some of the best waiting times for emergency departments in Australia prior to the significant decline under Labor over the last decade?

MR CORBELL: I would not take Mr Hanson's word for it, Madam Speaker. I will certainly be very happy to seek some advice on those questions. What I would say is that under this Labor administration we have dramatically increased capacity. We put in place more beds, more doctors and nurses and the single largest investment in health infrastructure that this territory has ever seen—important investments like the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, the Canberra Region Cancer Centre, the new adult mental health facility, the new secure mental health facility, the new University of Canberra public hospital, new community health centres in Belconnen and Gungahlin, and upgrades in Tuggeranong. These are important investments in our community.

Mr Hanson: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mr Hanson: It goes to relevance, Madam Speaker. I was asking why it is that we have seen a decline in emergency department waiting times over the last decade. The minister has not gone to that point. He is listing a shopping list of other things. But the point is: why is it that there has been a decline in waiting times over the last decade, since Labor got into power?

MADAM SPEAKER: I would remind the minister of standing order 118(a) and ask him to be directly relevant to the question.

Mr Corbell: I have concluded my answer, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, are you planning for an increase in emergency department service in winter this year to ensure that the ED can meet winter demand?

MR CORBELL: Our public hospital management every year has arrangements in place to anticipate increases in demand for a range of reasons, including, for example, increased presentations in relation to flu and related conditions. So that is a standard operating parameter within which our hospitals operate.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when will Canberrans get timely services in the emergency department?

MR CORBELL: I think Canberrans understand that our public hospital system is seeing significant pressure and I think Canberrans will also understand that the largest increase we have seen in presentations in our emergency department has been for low urgency matters, predominantly in categories 4 and 5. Why are more and more people coming to the emergency department for categories 4 and 5? Could it be due to the fact that Prime Minister Abbott and the federal government want to impose a charge for people to go and see their GP?

We already know that the ACT reports the highest level of incidence of people declining to go to the GP because of concern about costs. The most recent Productivity Commission report confirms that we have the highest percentage of Canberrans reporting that they will not go see the GP because they are concerned about costs. What is the response of the Liberal Party? The response of the Liberal Party is to ask people to pay more to go and see the doctor. That is their policy.

Mr Hanson: You're lying. It's not true!

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, withdraw.

Mr Hanson: I will withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: And when you withdraw, stand up and withdraw properly.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We know they want to call it other things. It goes from a price signal to a value signal, apparently, whatever a value signal is. Maybe that is a new term for a tax. *(Time expired.)*

Uriarra Village—solar farm

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, in light of today's announcement that the OneSun Capital solar project will not be built at Uriarra, when did you or your directorate first start giving consideration to moving the site from Uriarra village?

MR CORBELL: It is not the decision of the government to relocate the site. It is a decision of the proponent. The proponent indicated to me late last year that they were giving contemplation to that and that has now been confirmed today.

Madam Speaker, this is a very welcome development. I am sure it will be welcomed by the residents of Uriarra. Indeed, I know that it will be.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Wall interjecting—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Wall, Mr Hanson!

MR CORBELL: I know that it will be, Madam Speaker, because we have heard them say as much in media reports this morning. But it is also a welcome development for this project. This is an important renewable energy project for the city and for our country at a time when the federal government continues to undermine certainty in the investment market for renewable energy generation.

At a time when the federal Liberal government wants to cut funding and support to renewable energy projects across the country—and has continued to pursue that course of action as late as this morning—this government, this Labor government, is serious about providing the environment and the policy measures that support the development of a low carbon economy and the economic and environmental benefits that flow from that.

So this is a very welcome outcome today. There are still more hurdles to be cleared, but the proponent is very clear that they wish to relocate to the Williamsdale site, subject, of course, to achieving all the necessary approvals. The government have indicated that we are very happy to work with them to see whether or not that outcome can be achieved.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, has the ACT government at any time offered any compensation waiver or financial contribution to any entity involved in the Uriarra solar proposal or has any proponent requested such assistance?

MR CORBELL: No, and no.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, when were residents informed of the decision to switch the site?

MR CORBELL: This morning.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what lessons has the government learnt about locating industrial-type developments on the doorstep of residential areas, given this and the Macarthur power station proposal?

MR CORBELL: Madam Speaker—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Let Mr Corbell answer the question.

MR CORBELL: Once again the Liberal Party show their hostility to renewable energy generation. Once again they show their hostility to technologies of the future that are critical to achieve the environmental and the economic development outcomes we want for our city and for our community. In marked contrast to the hostility that we see from those opposite, this government is serious about supporting investment in renewable energy, driving down our city's greenhouse gas emissions and seeing the economic benefits that flow from such investment. That is why we are driving—

Mr Hanson: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have a point of order?

Mr Hanson: The question was very much about what the government has learnt about locating industrial developments on the doorstep of residential areas rather than any particular dissertation about the need for renewable energy. It is not about the need for it, necessarily; it is about the location. I also point out to the minister that gas-fired power stations are not renewable.

MADAM SPEAKER: That is not part of the point of order. That is a debating point.

Mr Hanson: He might appreciate the advice, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I do not appreciate it, Mr Hanson. The standing orders clearly say that the answer shall be concise and directly relevant. The question was about what lessons the government has learnt. Would you like to answer that question in accordance with the standing orders, Mr Corbell?

MR CORBELL: I will be delighted to, Madam Speaker. Following the solar auction round that awarded feed-in tariff entitlements at both Uriarra and at Mugga Lane, the government reviewed the option framework and in our most recent option framework, in case those opposite had not noticed, we introduced for the first time in Australia weighted criteria that require proponents to demonstrate strong community engagement as part of their proposals. *(Time expired.)*

University of Canberra—development

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Economic Development. Chief Minister, can you provide the Assembly with details of the groundbreaking agreement recently signed with the University of Canberra?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the question and note the undoubted interest of those opposite in higher education. I am very pleased to be able to advise that earlier this month I joined with the vice-chancellor, Stephen Parker, to sign an agreement of strategic intent to foster the growth and development of the University of Canberra.

The ACT government has a shared vision with the university where we seek to enhance the university's international reputation for providing high quality student experiences, and ensure that the university is financially sustainable and resilient over the long term and that it makes an even stronger contribution to the Canberra economy.

I have talked at length about Canberra becoming the true knowledge capital. Through this agreement with the University of Canberra, we are turning these words and these desires into action. This is a concrete step towards fostering growth and, through this growth, improving educational and career opportunities for students, attracting world-leading researchers to the University of Canberra and encouraging commercialisation of research discoveries.

The university must be able to unlock the potential of its campus and it must be able to develop revenue streams beyond federal government payments. Investment in the University of Canberra campus will create job opportunities in Canberra in the construction sector and in the long term will attract highly skilled researchers and professionals and create a series of administrative positions. New facilities and services will benefit students and staff as well as provide direct community health benefits through the new teaching hospital.

Overall, a thriving, vibrant and dynamic campus is good for all of Belconnen and it is good for Canberra. A key part of the agreement, therefore, is confirmation that this government will bring forward a range of legislative reforms to allow the university to more actively create and pursue commercial opportunities; to facilitate complementary development on the 120-hectare campus, including residential development to house the many people who want to live near their workplaces in the new hospital, health and innovation precincts; to improve and expand the purpose of the university to provide wider services to the community and to engage more strongly in public discourse; and to modernise its governance arrangements.

Importantly, the agreement also sets out a range of clear boundaries for the university in relation to campus development. This includes placing an overall limit on the number of non-student residential dwellings of 3,300, as well as an annual cap of around 200 on the number being offered for sale in any given year.

This clear and open collaboration is even more important for the university in the climate of uncertainty created by the federal Liberal government's funding cuts and proposals for deregulation of the higher education sector. No-one knows what Christopher Pyne's next moves will be in relation to higher education and funding arrangements. That is a great uncertainty. In stark contrast, the agreement struck between the University of Canberra and the ACT government gives certainty and recognises the importance of maintaining our open and collaborative partnership.

The silence from the ACT opposition about their federal counterparts' agenda to slash funding for higher education and research and the impact that would have on Canberra is deafening. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, given the University of Canberra is operating in an—

MADAM SPEAKER: Preamble. There should not be a preamble. I will let you go this once.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Why is it so important to allow the university to unlock the potential of its campus?

MR BARR: The University of Canberra operates in a highly competitive and uncertain higher education environment. They need to be constantly improving their offering to students and, indeed, to researchers. The University of Canberra leadership and the government are determined to make this happen. Prospective students are now able to directly compare courses, teaching facilities and postgraduate career opportunities across universities around this country and around the world in a way that was impossible decades ago.

Australia and Canberra in particular have many advantages that make our universities very attractive to local, interstate and international students. But we cannot be complacent and we cannot assume that no competitors are trying to overtake us. Today's highly mobile international student population and rapidly rising Asian middle class expect facilities and learning environments that rival the top universities in the United States and Europe.

UC has done a lot with what it has, but now is the time for this university to take a big leap into a whole, connected and fully utilised campus. Just one example is the University of Canberra public hospital, which will give students hands-on healthcare experience in state-of-the-art facilities. That will put the University of Canberra ahead of so many institutions that are offering comparable courses.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how will this agreement enhance Canberra's reputation as an education city?

MR BARR: Through the development of the university's campus and the construction of world-class research and training facilities, this agreement will lead to an expanded learning opportunity for prospective students. It will position the University of Canberra as one of Australia's most innovative tertiary institutions with a regional, national and international reputation.

One in nine fellow Canberrans already studies or works in our higher education sector. This is the highest proportion of any city in Australia and perhaps one of the highest in the world. The sector is contributing \$2.6 billion to our economy and there are 16,000 Canberrans employed. We are a proud university city, a true knowledge capital.

We seek, through these reforms, to empower the University of Canberra to grow, to create jobs for our city, to attract new investment and for the higher education sector to take its rightful place as one of the leading lights in economic growth in Canberra. On this side of the chamber we support this agenda proudly and we do note that those opposite, true to the Liberal position of wanting to cut higher education and not support this sector, are demonstrating yet again to the people of Canberra their disdain for higher education and the value that this sector has for our economy.

We will continue to campaign for a stronger University of Canberra. This side of politics believes in higher education: the value that that brings to our community and to our economy. We are not ashamed to say it and we will continue to campaign for it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what was the average number of unit sales in Belconnen over the last five years, and will you table the analysis that shows the impact of an additional 200 units per year for the next 16 years in that market?

MR BARR: The average number of unit sales has exceeded that, with significant releases within the Belconnen town centre. The government looks to cater for a population in this city of over half a million within the next couple of decades. We will soon hit the 400,000 mark. We have a policy of urban infill, seeking to accommodate 50 per cent of the city's population growth within the existing footprint. The availability of additional land will assist us in meeting our supply-side targets. As the shadow treasurer well knows, increasing the supply of land will assist in improving housing affordability. If the shadow treasurer wishes to stand in the way of the development of the University of Canberra and all of the possibilities that that brings for our economy then he stands condemned as a hypocrite and someone who does not truly believe—

MADAM SPEAKER: Withdraw.

MR BARR: I withdraw, Madam Speaker—and as someone who does not truly believe in one of this city's strongest growth industries, higher education, and the capacity of the University of Canberra to achieve its full potential for higher education and for this city. This government supports that unashamedly and will prioritise this

because growing the University of Canberra is one of the most significant things that we can do to grow jobs in this city, to increase wealth in this city and to improve social outcomes in this city. That is what we are seeking to do, to ensure that the university has a sustainable financial future. We know the Liberal Party are not interested in that because their position is to cut funding and to kill off the University of Canberra, and that is what the Liberal Party are about.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MR BARR: It is writ large with the interjections we hear from the shadow treasurer and his contributions today. *(Time expired.)*

Housing—homelessness

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Housing. The average number of clients actively held by FirstPoint each month has increased from 283 presenting units for the six months ending December 2013 to more than 344 presenting units for the six months ending December 2014. This trajectory is expected to continue, despite the fact that Housing ACT has a zero per cent vacancy rate. Minister, is it true that FirstPoint's staff has been reduced from five full-time equivalents to four full-time equivalents?

MS BERRY: Sorry, was the question about the staffing at FirstPoint or was it about their waiting list for housing?

Ms Lawder: The staffing.

MS BERRY: I will have to get back to the member on that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what was the rationale for reducing FirstPoint staff when its client numbers are increasing?

MS BERRY: I will have to get back to the member on that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, is it true that FirstPoint is now closed between the hours of 12:30 and 1:30 pm daily until Friday, 1st May?

MS BERRY: I will have to take that question on notice as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: If the minister is going to take the question relating to the hours on notice, perhaps she will also be able to take on notice an explanation as to why that might be the case.

MS BERRY: Sorry, Madam Speaker, why—

Mr Wall: Why that is the case.

MS BERRY: The case for the last question?

Mr Wall: An explanation, yes.

MS BERRY: I will take that on notice.

Budget—concessions

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, on 17 March you announced a review of the ACT's concession programs for transport and basic services. Is it true that the review is designed to reduce or remove concessions for these basic services?

MR BARR: The review is looking into the long-term sustainability of the ACT concessions program. The government have significantly increased concessions in a number of areas but we are looking to ensure that concessions continue to be targeted at those most in need. We will be paying particular attention to those areas of concessions that are not means tested, and that is appropriate. We do not want to be giving concessions to millionaires, and we will look closely to ensure that our concessions are appropriately targeted because it is the government's desire to provide increased assistance to those most in need. If the Liberal Party are in the business, which we know they are, of wanting to support concessions to those who earn very high incomes—as is their wont; that is what they are in politics to deliver, to shovel money to rich people—we are focused on ensuring that our concessions program provides increased support to those who need it most.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth—and I would like to hear it, Mr Hanson.

MR SMYTH: Treasurer, is the government targeting particular groups in the community as far as removing concessions for transport and basic services is concerned?

MR BARR: No. What we are seeking to do is provide concessions to those who need them. That is what good government is about. Good government is about ensuring that those who need assistance receive it, and that is what we are seeking to do with this concessions review.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will you publicly release the concessions review?

MR BARR: Yes. The government is looking to have a very public process in relation to this. We are taking submissions. We have published the terms of reference of the review. This issue has been debated on more than one occasion in this place, in this parliamentary term, in relation to increases in funding for the concessions program. But let me be clear that we want to ensure that the concessions the community provides through the ACT government go to those who need it most. This is not an exercise in funnelling money to people who do not need it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why is the government building light rail to service three per cent of Canberra's population but cutting concessions for the needy?

MR BARR: The government seeks to improve public transport provision, which is of great assistance to those who cannot afford private vehicles or one of Mr Coe's Audis. That is an important investment in social equity in this city, to have a better public transport system that allows people—

Mr Hanson: Will it help them out in Tuggeranong and Belconnen?

Mr Coe: Keep talking about the Audis.

Mr Hanson: And Weston?

Mr Coe: You are doing our job for us.

MR BARR: to access better public transport. To respond to those interjections, although I should not, Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, you should not.

MR BARR: better public transport provision across Canberra is the government's agenda. That will mean improvements in walking and cycling infrastructure and a better bus system that involves enhancement of services across the ACT. The capacity that is freed up in the light rail corridor can be redistributed around the city. We seek to improve our public transport system through demand-responsive transport initiatives and, through the roads and parking minister, we seek to continue to enhance our overall transport network.

Those people who continue to commute by car from the southern suburbs will not have to compete with 50,000 extra Gungahlin residents when they come turning into Parkes Way or for the car parking spots in the city if we have an efficient public transport system that delivers a better outcome for all Canberrans.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: If those opposite think that the answer is more of the same, they are wrong.

Hospitals—University of Canberra

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, you launched the design consultation for the University of Canberra public hospital last week. How does this facility improve healthcare options for Canberrans?

MADAM SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Health, Mr Corbell. I am just mindful that there was a question last week that at least had the same preamble as that; I am not quite sure that the question was the same.

MR CORBELL: It is not the same question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr Smyth interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR CORBELL: It's a miserable life over there in opposition, isn't it, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: I couldn't possibly comment; it would be unparliamentary.

MR CORBELL: It's a miserable life over there.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, you might like to answer the question.

MR CORBELL: Indeed, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Or I could sit you down.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Are you going to answer the question?

MR CORBELL: I am endeavouring to, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the new University of Canberra public hospital will play a very important role in the delivery of health care for our city. This is a project worth more than \$100 million, designed to improve health infrastructure for everybody in our community. It is the first time that the government has committed to the development of a dedicated, purpose-built subacute hospital to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population.

The delivery is part of improving healthcare services for Canberrans, in particular shifting subacute service provision away from our tertiary and high care treatment hospital campuses at both the Canberra Hospital and, to a lesser degree, Calvary public, and instead providing a dedicated, purpose-built facility to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population.

In addition to the clinical services that it will provide, it will provide important opportunities for growth and development at the University of Canberra itself.

First of all, we know that the University of Canberra has a critical role in training healthcare professionals, in particular allied health professionals and nursing professionals. The co-location at the University of Canberra will ensure that the health care delivered and the options available to Canberrans will be delivered in a very timely and effective way but also in a way that leverages the expertise available at the University of Canberra itself.

The University of Canberra is a leading and growing tertiary institution for our city. This government, unlike those opposite, wants to invest in growing and strengthening the university, in collaboration with delivering better healthcare options for the Canberra community.

This project meets both of those aims. There is clearly a need in our community for coordinated care. The co-location of a range of rehabilitation and subacute care facilities on one site in a purpose-built facility creates the opportunity for a rehabilitation centre of excellence. This co-location also offers the opportunity to provide cohesive, robust and clearly defined service models.

Let us look at some of the services that this new facility is going to be providing to the Canberra community—hydrotherapy, psychiatric rehabilitation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, exercise pathology, social work and structured psychological therapies. These are really important services, and for the first time they will be brought together in one location. In bringing them together, we are also making an investment in and giving confidence about the future growth of the University of Canberra itself. Co-location of health services with academic tertiary training is very important. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how does the University of Canberra public hospital improve access to health care for Canberra's ageing population?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for the supplementary. The ageing of our population is critical. The number of people over the age of 65 will double between now and about 2065. So we have an enormous total of older Canberrans that we are going to need to make sure that collectively, as a community, we provide the services and facilities for well into the future. The University of Canberra public hospital is part of the government's response to that emerging issue. The delivery of subacute facilities in areas like rehabilitation, geriatric care and mental health services is critical for an ageing population.

Obviously there is a lot of interest in a range of other services that I know are already seeing increases in demand—for example, hydrotherapy. The University of Canberra public hospital will provide a new hydrotherapy capacity for the community. This is, I know, a service very highly valued by a large number of people in the community.

But there will be other similar services. There will be a therapy mobility garden space. There will be specially designed wards with, for example, gymnasium facilities also designed to make sure that we encourage activity as part of rehabilitation for that ageing population.

So this investment is a very important one. It is part of the bigger picture that the government has for the growth and development of the University of Canberra. We should proudly be a university city. We should proudly be a city that emphasises, supports and facilitates its natural strengths, and there is no doubt that our natural strengths include our tertiary education sector. The investment of over \$100 million in the University of Canberra campus, in the new University of Canberra public hospital, is part of that bigger picture, as well as ensuring we meet the needs of an ageing population.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how will the UCPH improve access to health care for people with a mental illness?

MR CORBELL: This will be a very important facility for people with a mental illness. I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary. It is designed to work in a complementary manner with the new secure mental health unit, on which we know construction is about to commence. That secure mental health unit will address patients with very high needs and the University of Canberra public hospital will provide a broader range of services for the less acute needs of people with a mental illness.

In particular, it will provide facilities that are focused on providing suitable short-stay accommodation for people with mental illness, where they need assistance with rehabilitation or indeed respite. That is very important in the context of mental health services. We know that ageing facilities like Brian Hennessy House will need to be transitioned away from, and the University of Canberra hospital is designed to help meet the replacement, in part, of those services. So there is a very important emphasis on mental health as part of the broader focus on the rehabilitation of people as they leave the tertiary treatment sector, whether that is in relation to physical injury or whether it is in relation to more serious mental illness.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how will the UCPH improve education and training options for Canberra students?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her supplementary. I have already briefly mentioned the synergies between UCPH and the training of nursing and allied health professionals at the University of Canberra. But perhaps it is best to emphasise the importance of this to the university by quoting the vice-chancellor, Professor Parker. He said earlier this month, at the opening:

Having this innovative hospital on campus will provide unique teaching, research and practice opportunities for our staff and students, contributing to the improvement of patient care ...

That is a great endorsement from the vice-chancellor of this investment on his university's campus. He sees the potential for collaboration and leveraging the opportunities for investment that the government will make on the University of Canberra campus. And it will add to the other training facilities and opportunities that the university itself has invested in, such as the UC health club, the new GP super clinic which is now being run on the University of Canberra campus, and, of course, their mainstream training and education for nursing and allied health professionals.

It is very much a forward-thinking project for the city and for our community. It is important that we make these investments, not just in terms of better health care but also in terms of the opportunities for growth, development and strengthening of the University of Canberra as a tertiary education institution, one that can add so much more to our community and to our economy.

ACTION bus service—schools

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, Monday, 27 April is an ACT public service holiday. As a result of this decision, ACT public schools will not operate on Monday, 27 April. However, some non-government schools will operate as normal on this day. Recently, ACTION buses decided not to run school services on 27 April. Minister, why was the decision taken to cancel all school services on Monday, 27 April?

MR RATTENBURY: ACTION has taken the decision, and I have discussed this with a range of my colleagues, to run a Saturday timetable on Monday, 27 April. As members may be aware, under the ACT government's enterprise agreements, that day falls as an ACT government holiday, but it is not a public holiday for the whole of the ACT. It is a somewhat awkward situation but it is the one we find ourselves in.

The consequence of this is that ACT government public servants are entitled to the day off and ACT public schools will be closed. However, federal public servants will be working, much of the private sector presumably will be working and non-government schools in the ACT will also be operating. That is the situation that is taking place in the community.

Under the ACTION enterprise agreement, ACTION drivers are not required to work that day. It is a voluntary day, as are weekends. So ACTION cannot direct drivers to

work on that day. As a result of this, ACTION has sought drivers to volunteer to work that day. Over the course of a number of weeks of seeking volunteers, about 200 drivers have come forward. I thank those drivers for coming forward for that day.

That left us with a decision on what timetable to run that day. Normally, we require over 400 drivers to run a full Monday timetable. As a result of only having around 200 drivers, I could not guarantee a full timetable, obviously, and I took the view that it was better to provide certainty and to ensure that people knew exactly what was happening.

That is why the announcement has been made today. Letters are being sent to all of the schools affected today. There is communication going to the heads of various peak bodies—for example, the Catholic Education Office and the independent schools association. We have taken a view that it is better to make the call that we cannot guarantee services and that therefore parents should make their own arrangements than to have a situation where we attempt to provide a network that we cannot fulfil and children are left on the side of the road.

I think it is better to have certainty, to make the call now and allow parents to make the alternative arrangements—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR RATTENBURY: and have certainty about what the situation will be than to find ourselves in a situation where a child might be left at a bus stop not knowing what the situation is going to be. It is not an ideal situation. I will be the first to admit that, but I think it is better that we communicate clearly, that we are up-front with parents and that there is certainty about what is going to happen on Monday, 27 April.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, would it be possible to run ACTION school services to non-government schools on Monday, 27 April?

MR RATTENBURY: In addition to the information I provided in my previous answer, which goes in part to that question, the other thing is that a proportion of students, around 40 per cent, catch non-school services—if you like, regular ACTION services. So it is not possible to simply pick out the school services and run all of those because quite a few students travel on regular route services.

A range of options were contemplated, including the one that Mr Doszpot has just outlined. Because of the way students catch the bus network it is not possible to provide, I guess, a specialised just school delivery network. I am also mindful of the fact that we have a large number of people who are working regularly on that day as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, do you accept that situations like this erode confidence in the public transport system?

MR RATTENBURY: What a situation like this does is to underline the lack of flexibility available to the government in the operation of the ACTION transport network. The community can have confidence that the government is being up-front with them. This is more than 4½ weeks away. That does include two weeks of school holidays. But that is why the announcement has gone out today, before people leave for school holidays—because it is the first day of the next term for private schools, the non-government schools. I think people can have confidence that the government has been up-front with them about what is possible and what services will be provided on Monday, 27 April.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, will you allow for discounted rates for any schools that wish to charter a bus to collect students, drop them off and pick them up from school?

MR RATTENBURY: I will be more than happy to have discussions with schools about a range of options. What I can indicate to the Assembly is that Monday, 27 April will be a fare-free day on ACTION, in recognition of the fact that the government is not able to provide a full network that day. That is, I guess, an act to acknowledge some of the inconvenience that could result to commuters.

The government has also made the offer to all schools affected by this that are operating on that day—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members! We would like to hear Mr Rattenbury's answer.

MR RATTENBURY: If they think they will need assistance with managing traffic, due to additional car traffic that day, the government will seek to assist them. Where schools have other ideas, the government is happy to try and work with them in order to deal with the logistical issues that are going to arise, potentially, on that day.

Canberra Hospital—planning

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health concerning master planning at the Canberra Hospital site. Minister, is the Aurora Projects “concept master plan” prepared in 2012 the current master plan for the Canberra Hospital campus?

MR CORBELL: I understand that a master plan was prepared around that time, and I am further advised by Health that it is proposing to update that master plan due to developments at the Canberra Hospital campus.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, does the current master plan for the Canberra Hospital campus include provision for a new hospital tower block?

MR CORBELL: I am not familiar with all of the detail immediately to hand in relation to the master plan. However, members would be aware that the government has already indicated its intention to proceed with the development of a new tower block at the Canberra Hospital. As to whether or not that is reflected in a document prepared approximately three or four years ago, I will need to clarify that and provide further information to the member.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, when will the updated concept master plan for the Canberra Hospital be released to the public?

MR CORBELL: The advice I have from Health is that work on the renewal of the master plan will take place later this year and there will be opportunities for public comment as part of that process.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Will you provide the Assembly with a copy of the existing master plan and make a commitment to table the updated master plan as soon as it is finalised?

MR CORBELL: It is always the government's intention for these documents to be public documents.

Education—Canberra College Cares program

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, the new CCCares facility recently opened at Canberra College in Woden. Can you inform the Assembly about this new facility and how it will benefit the students of CCCares?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Porter for her question on CCCares and recognise that she was at the formal opening of the centre. Indeed it is a very great centre for these young parents. I was very pleased to be able to open that. It is a great facility on the Canberra College campus. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and students of Canberra College and CCCares for hosting the event and for really showcasing the great work that CCCares does. I wish the students at CCCares all the best for their future studies. The completion of this project means that the community has another great education facility, but I think it is even more significant, given the students and the challenges they have faced in their young years.

Since its inception in 2005, CCCares has supported hundreds of young parents in their quest to complete their formal education. Reconnecting with education can often be a difficult prospect for young parents. The new CCCares facility allows for the provision of individualised and flexible programs, designed particularly to meet the educational needs of young parents and the care needs of their children. It provides flexible open learning areas, as well as specialised teaching spaces.

At the new facility, CCCares students have greater access to a variety of vocational studies, including an industry-standard hair and beauty salon, allowing for competency-based vocational training. This space will also enhance student learning around topics such as personal grooming and presentation at interviews.

There is an industry-standard hospitality suite and coffee nook, where students can achieve vocational competencies from a variety of packages, including home kitchens that will focus on meal preparation. There is a group room for studies including children's services, where students engage in a combination of theoretical and practical activities with their children. This training for their certificate III in children's services also enhances the operation of the daily CCCares program for parental care of their children and babies. There are inside and outside spaces for parent and child to maximise fine motor skills, and to learn how to play in an appropriate and safe manner.

Extensive partnerships and linkages with community organisations allow the CCCares program to be a one-stop learning shop for young parents. At the new CCCares facility nurses from the child, youth and women's health program provide twice-weekly on-site clinics, ensuring advice and care are made available to pregnant young women, young parents and their children who may otherwise not have contact or, indeed, little contact with health services. They also provide referrals for individuals to off-campus health professionals, maintain individual health records of students and their children, and advise teaching staff on a range of health and welfare issues.

This is a fabulous facility and I am very proud to be part of a Labor government that, since 2005—for a decade—has seen this as a priority and has seen it realised in this wonderful facility on the college campus at Woden.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what benefits will co-locating CCCares on the main college site have for students?

MS BURCH: Apart from having a brand-new purpose-built building with all the facilities that I have mentioned, moving CCCares to the Canberra College campus provides many additional benefits.

We know that being a new parent can be very isolating, perhaps even more so at a very young age. The co-location of CCCares facilities with Canberra College will significantly reduce the social isolation that is often experienced by young parents. The new facility offers students the opportunity to make social connections across the

wider college community. They will mingle with the broader student cohort. Co-locating the program at Canberra College and near the Woden bus interchange allows significantly improved transport access for CCCares students.

In addition, locating CCCares at the Canberra College allows its students to engage in the additional curriculum that is offered within the mainstream college, broadening each student's potential to work towards their year 12 certificate. The students there will have access to the additional curriculum offered through the college. This includes areas of science, performing arts, textiles, art and design, and other subjects. Students will be able to study towards a year 12 certificate at a tertiary accredited level if desired, as accessing classes will be possible through this co-location.

Proximity to Woden Westfield and local businesses will enable work placement for CCCares students. And the partnership with ACT Health will be further developed as CCCares students are within walking distance of services provided by the Canberra Hospital.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, why is it important that the ACT government supports CCCares?

MS BURCH: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the question. We know that research suggests that reconnecting with education can often be a difficult prospect for pregnant and parenting young people. One of the most effective ways to minimise the risk of such outcomes is to support pregnant and parenting young people to stay connected to schooling. This allows the young parents to minimise the potential negative impact that early childbearing can have on adolescents, including lower educational attainment, lower occupational attainment and an increased risk of poverty and violence. Alternatively, education programs also provide young parents with the necessary impetus for positive life change and are a critical point at which intergenerational disadvantage can be addressed.

The college has a number of partnership agreements across the community. The health needs attended to through the partnerships include antenatal and postnatal nursing and child immunisations and occupational therapy, physio and speech therapy.

However, the best reason to support CCCares, I believe, comes from the students themselves. It was a pleasure to talk with the students there. Students have commented that the program has supported their future. As one student said, "Being able to bring my kids to school with me and have them cared for while I study means I can go to school and learn." Another said, "I now see a future for me and my children. I was so lost before and couldn't see a way out." Finally: "CCCares has offered me support when I had none. The staff is amazing; I now feel life has a lot to offer me and my kids."

One of the other points that the students made was that their completion of education made them parents that they wanted their children to be proud of. I think that is the underlying story of the benefits and the absolute reason why this government supports CCCares. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what research underpins the CCCares model? How has this research been used to help students locally, nationally and internationally?

MS BURCH: I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in CCCares. The program was developed in collaboration with researchers from the University of Canberra, a fine institute that we have here. Through this partnership, a model to address the critical factors to supporting pregnant and parenting young people was developed. Those critical factors include: place and space; community partnerships; flexible delivery; resourcing; on-site child care; staff development; policy review, including leadership and evaluation; and program sustainability.

In 2009 CCCares won a \$750,000 schools first grant. This grant, sponsored by the National Australia Bank, rewards schools for unique and beneficial programs. These funds were largely used to support the founding of the Australian Young, Pregnant and Parenting Network, allowing the success of CCCares to be made available nationally.

This network, with over 80 member organisations and service providers across Australia and New Zealand, was established to support pregnant and parenting young people to create the best possible start for themselves and their children. There has been positive national media on many occasions reporting the outcomes of CCCares. It has been subject to a deal of educational research through an ongoing partnership with the University of Canberra.

This partnership between the ACT Education and Training Directorate and the University of Canberra has been extended to support the University of Toronto in developing CCCares-style programs in Canada. The research undertaken in the development and refinement of the CCCares program has been used by education departments across Australia and internationally to inform their responses to the needs of pregnant and parenting students. It is a great program and I encourage all to get behind this and to recognise the benefits to young parents' lives.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Housing—homelessness

MS BERRY: I have some information in response to a question asked by Ms Lawder and Mr Wall. The ACT government has maintained the same level of funding to FirstPoint. There has been no reduction in funding. Decisions around staffing structures are made by Connections ACT, which is the organisation that manages FirstPoint. Connections ACT recommended to Housing ACT that the service be closed between 12.30 and 1.30 each day to assist with quality improvement. This has allowed staff who are dealing with increased workloads to attend to administrative duties and to have a lunch break. Housing ACT agreed that the service be closed

between 12.30 and 1.30 on a trial basis from 16 March 2015 until 1 May 2015. All callers who leave a message on the phone line over the break will have their calls returned as soon as possible on the same day.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act, pursuant to subsection 20(2)—Independent Reviewer—Report for the period 1 July to 31 December 2014, dated 27 February 2015, prepared by Prof Dennis Pearce.

Canada—Security incident—Letter to the Speaker from the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons, Parliament of Canada, dated 20 November 2014.

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

Remuneration Tribunal Act, pursuant to subsection 12(2)—Determinations, together with statements for:

Medicines Advisory Committee—Determination No 1 of 2015, dated February 2015.

Part-time Holders of Public Office—Amended Determination No 11 of 2014, dated February 2015.

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

Short-term contracts:

Leesha Pitt, dated 11 and 12 March 2015.

Savvas Pertsinidis, dated 11 and 12 March 2015.

Wilhelmina Blount, dated 4 and 10 March 2015.

Contract variation:

Rodney Bray, dated 6 and 11 March 2015.

Ms Burch presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act—Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-41 (LR, 12 March 2015).

Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act—Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-9 (LR, 12 March 2015).

Unit Titles Act—Unit Titles Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-8 (LR, 11 March 2015).

Business—investment

Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM SPEAKER: I have received letters from Dr Bourke, Mr Coe, Mr Doszpot, Ms Fitzharris, Mr Hanson, Ms Lawder, Ms Porter and Mr Smyth proposing matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, I have determined that the matter proposed by Ms Fitzharris be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of investor confidence in the ACT.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (3.36): Investor confidence is vital in any economy. In many ways it is most important to smaller economies. It is a simple fact that Canberra, despite its national significance and the affection everyone in this place has for it, is a small city. Our population is around two per cent of the national population and, just as we are a small city, so too is Australia a small country, with just two per cent of the world's population.

I think it should be obvious to everyone here that we cannot maintain the economy we need to remain the most livable city in the world by looking inward. We are too small for that. Canberra simply must look outward to maintain its economic growth into the future—outward to find markets for the goods and services we produce and outward to find the investment we need to continue to grow.

I do not think it is possible for me to overstate how important investment from outside our borders is to driving our economic growth. The territory as a whole exports something like \$1.2 billion in services per annum. We export more proportionately for our economy's size. We rely on this trade and the confidence investors have in us to support our economy.

Across the three years from 2010-11 to 2012-13 inclusive we had proposed investments in ACT real estate alone worth \$3.04 billion. Nearly half a billion dollars of this proposed investment related to new developments in the ACT, creating hundreds of construction jobs across each of those years.

Canberra does not just compete for this investment with other cities and states in Australia; we compete for capital in a global market with an ever-increasing range of choices for investors. In an environment of fierce competition one of the most important things investors look for is the level of confidence they can have in the market—confidence in the local economy, but, just as importantly, confidence in the consistency of government policies and decision making.

Government activities and investor confidence are inextricably linked. The ACT's moderate debt burden is, of course, funded by investors. Without these investors we would not be able to respond to challenges like the federal government's attacks on our economy in a timely and effective way.

This Labor government has a proud history of delivering the sort of consistency that gives the highest levels of investor confidence. Confidence in the government's constancy underpins our AAA credit rating. Ratings agencies know that when the government commits to things those commitments can be counted on because they stick. This matters.

I know that this Labor government will continue to support investor confidence to deliver the investment in infrastructure our city needs to respond to the challenges our economy faces and to retain Canberra's status as the world's most livable city. Not only is the government determined to invest in public infrastructure; we are also determined keep the ACT an attractive destination for business investment.

Canberra is open for business, and through Invest Canberra we are taking that message out to the world to drive new investment in the territory. Through establishing Invest Canberra, this government has worked in close partnership with our local business community to promote the opportunities and benefits of investing in Canberra to investors around Australia, the region and the world.

This Assembly should be proud of the work that this Chief Minister and the former Chief Minister have done around our country and our region to drive investor awareness of our city's strengths. These strengths are built on the bedrock of a Labor government providing a stable, consistent environment where investors trust that their investments are secure in our city and are worth building on.

The people of Canberra want governments who plan for the long term—and, importantly, governments who can deliver those plans. This is a government that has demonstrated again and again that it plans for the long term, not just for the next election cycle, and we have demonstrated again and again that we deliver for the people of Canberra.

While the stable and consistent economic management of Labor governments has provided a platform for the economic growth that has lifted the standard of living in our city over the past decade, sovereign risk is unfortunately still an issue that weighs on investors' minds. The prospect of governments changing the goalposts on businesses is a very real concern for potential investors, especially for long-term projects that transform cities across electoral cycles.

Sovereign risk is one of the dirtiest terms investors ever hear. It should be equally as worrisome to any political party that has even the vaguest pretensions to being a party of government. Yet it is exactly this most worrying of risks we hear around the country when people talk about the Canberra Liberals. Investors look on in horror at the thought of such short-term thinking and the effect that this outlook could have on the hard-won reputation this territory has as a place investors can trust.

Critically, sovereign risk has long-lasting impacts on confidence—not just on trust in the government as a partner but on confidence in the broader economy. The possibility that a government will tear up contracts on one project raises the possibility that future projects may suffer the same fate.

In addition, talking down our local economy has an equally dampening effect. Those opposite do not seem to mind talking down the economy or introducing doubt in investors' minds. I am not sure they realise how they are viewed as introducing a major risk to the territory's economy—what that risk might mean for future projects, for future contracts, what level of confidence the investment community might have if a previous contract has been torn up and what this risk means for jobs in our community. What this means is serious.

I am proud to be an advocate for jobs in our community. I know we need investment to keep delivering the jobs Canberrans deserve—indeed, the jobs Canberrans need, given the commonwealth's glee at removing federal jobs from Canberra. Despite the Canberra Liberals' efforts to do all they can to make sure they gain short-term political advantage out of the capital metro project, a long-term investment in a modern, fast and sustainable public transport system, they have yet to outline exactly what actions they will take to make sure this project does not go ahead and have not been able to say exactly what that will mean, which leaves us all wondering. And it certainly leaves the investment community wondering.

How they will make the case to those looking to invest in our long-term tourism projects, in our nation-leading urban renewal projects such as city to the lake and the renewal of Northbourne Avenue, or indeed investing in our higher education sector, is unclear.

This government will continue to govern for the long term, to govern for the long-term interests of our economy, for the long-term sustainability of our transport system and the long-term sustainability of Canberra's private sector. Investor confidence in our economy is vital to our future. I look forward to the debate today and to our combined efforts to do what we can to ensure we maintain the highest levels of investor confidence in the ACT.

Discussion concluded.

University of Canberra Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (3.44): 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 challenge of creating a livable, resilient and connected place for all Canberrans and those in the surrounding region. Canberra, like many other cities, is facing a 21st century challenge posed by population growth, climate change and energy use. The capacity of our growing city and region to absorb larger and changing populations and improve quality of life for all residents will depend to a considerable degree on the extent to which we can look at the urban environment and be able to accommodate its future growth but also to prosper from it. Therefore, the way in which we embrace the change is critical.

If we are to achieve the vision for a connected, livable and prosperous city, the changing demographics of the ACT will require significant shifts in planning policies to enable a choice of housing, facilitate new and innovative ways for services and community facilities to be delivered, and allow people to live in places where they are socially connected and familiar with local facilities and services.

We also need to ensure our planning is focused on providing more opportunities and places for people in our city to meet, interact and access the services they need. An integrated transport network is central to that, as is the way we strategically plan for growth in line with our key transport corridors and ensuring the viability of our local, group and town centres as well.

It is also about creating a city that is about people and the way Canberrans live in this city. The ACT government have this at the forefront of our mind as we get on with the job of integrating land use and transport planning that will see our city develop, meet the needs of its people, create opportunities for growth and fulfil our role as the nation's capital whilst being ever mindful of how we can keep true to what Canberrans love about living in this city.

The ACT planning strategy and transport for Canberra plan, both adopted in 2012, are key strategic plans that will guide and shape our city into the future. Both reinforce the ACT government's priorities and set about realising the potential of this city state. In combination, these documents prioritise development along and adjacent to major transport corridors that connect town centres. They will help deliver better transport and urban infrastructure and suburbs and centres which are connected. It is these strategic policies that will enable us to see our economy prosper, to diversify, to become sustainable and, importantly, foster innovation, not only for the benefit of Canberrans but for our whole region.

Before I speak specifically to the University of Canberra Amendment Bill, I will first talk about the importance of the connection between future plans for the University of Canberra campus and the Belconnen town centre master plan. The ACT planning strategy calls for master plans to be undertaken responding to place-specific needs for Canberra to be a city where everybody can take advantage of its network of centres, open spaces and modes of travel to enjoy a sense of wellbeing and participate in a vibrant civic and cultural life.

The master plan program is responding to the emergent policy agenda of this government by seeking to implement the outcomes and recommendations of strategies and programs aimed at ensuring that investment in our urban areas meets the aspirations and needs of our community both now and into the future. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that this work is progressing well on the renewal of the Belconnen master plan, one which will guide its development and secure its viability into the future.

The Belconnen town centre provides a significant amenity for the residents of the Belconnen area for recreation, employment, health and retail facilities. The centre's setting by Lake Ginninderra and its relationship with nearby institutions offers

advantages unmatched by many other urban areas in Australia. The ACT government has made significant investments in Belconnen, such as the Belconnen Arts Centre, the recently opened nurse-led Belconnen walk-in centre in the heart of the town centre and the investment in this project to build the University of Canberra public hospital. We need to strengthen and capitalise on these advantages to ensure Belconnen town centre improves and grows, that small businesses can thrive, that our national areas are valued and that our town centre is even better placed for the local community to visit, work and live.

The first phase of community engagement to gain feedback on the issues and aspirations for the town centre has recently concluded. The government has worked closely with community groups, particularly the Belconnen Community Council, to ensure the community are well informed on the progress, that we are well informed of community issues and that ongoing conversations about these key issues are effective and meaningful.

Over 80 individual submissions have been received during the initial engagement period, providing valuable evidence of the issues we need to address. These include: improving the safety and convenience of cycle and pedestrian connections across the town centre, particularly from Belconnen Way to the lake; the reuse of the former Joynton Smith busway as a cycleway; better cycle connections to the University of Canberra; better provision and location of car parking; better quality of town centre public realm, including issues such as children's playgrounds and public toilets; and the need to create destinations, particularly along Emu Bank. While there is a variety of opinion on building heights—the general consensus is that the additional height and residential population in the town centre is good—we need clearer controls on height, and ways to achieve quality building design and public realm outcomes.

Based on the feedback we have received, we quickly find out that the town centre has great opportunities, but it also faces considerable challenges. The development of a renewed Belconnen town centre master plan will provide clear planning principles and strategies to inform the future development and character of the existing town centre. The preparation of this master plan will assure that future challenges and opportunities are effectively met. Strategies being investigated to address a range of issues include ensuring anchor employment is maintained in the town centre to support the local economy, considering where the public realm and amenity requires improvement and considering new options for its effective delivery, improving connections for pedestrians and cyclists and in doing so taking away the focus from cars, and encouraging the creation of active and attractive town centre destinations such as Bunda Street in the city or the Kingston foreshore.

Belconnen should be a desirable destination of choice for socialising, recreation, shopping and dining. We are improving employment diversity by promoting the opportunities presented by the relationship with the University of Canberra, the AIS, Calvary hospital and the proposed university hospital and the town centre.

It is for these reasons that the University of Canberra Amendment Bill 2015 and, as foreshadowed by the Chief Minister, further changes to land planning and unit titling which will be brought to this place before June this year are so important at this time.

While the Liberal Party would like Canberrans to believe otherwise, the ACT government's intention in bringing this bill to the Assembly for consideration is to support the university to make better use of its property, develop its campus and enhance its service offering to the community for the benefit of all Canberrans.

The University of Canberra site is largely undeveloped. With the recently proposed University of Canberra public hospital, the amendment bill will facilitate the ability for this campus to expand, become more financially sustainable and, importantly, provide more employment. A principal benefit of the Belconnen town centre master plan and the University of Canberra master plan will be the integration of the University of Canberra site with the Belconnen town centre, making the combined areas more accessible, safe and vibrant and generally a more interesting place to study, work and recreate for students and staff on campus. The National University's exchange precinct adjoining city west in central Canberra is an extremely good example of how successful this can be, linking seamlessly the city and the university.

As a significant contributor to the provision of community facilities in Belconnen, the university has a real potential to further provide places for residents, workers, students and visitors to live and participate in activities and programs and provide for the expanded provision of community services. It is why we are working closely with the University of Canberra to help them realise this potential, and there is no better demonstration of that than the government's commitment to build the University of Canberra public hospital.

It is not just about delivering a new healthcare facility, which is, of course, on its own a fantastic investment for the north side of Canberra and the first of its kind; it is also about the benefits which will be realised through the substantial investment by the ACT government that will go well beyond the hospital doors. The benefits will flow to the tertiary education centre through the creation of jobs and activity in the surrounding suburbs and the Belconnen town centre. It is opportunities such as these that master planning can help realise.

The government's role is to ensure the Belconnen town centre is investment ready. It is up to all the sectors of our community to take advantage of these opportunities and to work with government to achieve success stories such as those being sought by the University of Canberra on its Belconnen site. Strengthening the relationship between the University of Canberra and the Belconnen town centre will also help ensure significant economic and employment benefits are realised, services, transport and amenities are effectively provided, and that the precinct becomes a competitive and attractive destination for investment. Enabling change at the university, including allowing for a broader mix of uses and permitting residential and commercial development, will ensure the university's future and provide long-term benefits not only to the Belconnen town centre and surrounding areas but for our whole city and, through it, the region.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (3.56), in reply: In closing the debate on the in-principle stage, I thank members for making their contributions. I have previously spoken in this place about

the government's commitment to growing the higher education sector and to enabling the University of Canberra to grow by developing its campus to become an even more attractive place for people to research, study and achieve tertiary and vocational qualifications.

We have a clear and strong vision for this sector and for the University of Canberra, which is set to become one of Australia's most innovative tertiary institutions—world ranked, with a national reach and international reputation. The government is taking steps to attract the best and brightest to live, work and study in Canberra and ultimately to stay and invest in our city and our region—as a centre for research excellence; a place to kick off a career or run a business; and a place that leverages from our knowledge economy and the many areas in which we have, or we are rapidly building, a comparative advantage.

The University of Canberra is set to have a much bigger part to play in delivering this vision through providing quality education and research outcomes, by driving innovation and generating jobs and through developing better services and facilities for our community to share.

Just last week the Minister for Health, Minister Corbell, launched a new health research institute at the university. This institute will bring together expertise across disciplines at the University of Canberra to deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for the community. Researchers will work together on ways to improve lifespan health and wellbeing; disease prevention and treatment; and healthcare systems, research and technology.

The bill today is another step on the government's path to modernise the University of Canberra Act by updating provisions about the operation of the council and to support the university in making better use of its property and developing its campus. The proposed changes will support the efficient and effective operations of the council, deliver better governance and enable the university to enter into commercial arrangements not hindered by unnecessary legislative restrictions.

The expansion of the University of Canberra's functions will help to clarify that the university may provide services to the benefit of the broader community and that it may engage in public discourse. Facilitating commercial development of its property will create a greater range of economic opportunities and stimulate economic activity in the ACT region.

As I have previously mentioned, I have in recent weeks signed an agreement of strategic intent with Professor Parker, the vice-chancellor of the university, outlining our joint commitment to ongoing development and growth of the university's Bruce campus. We are together committed to enabling the University of Canberra to attract broader investment in its campus. We expect this will grow job opportunities not just in the construction sector but in a range of sectors linked to the innovation, health and sports precincts planned for the campus.

When presenting this bill last month, I foreshadowed my intention to bring forward a range of changes to land planning and unit titling arrangements before June 2015 to

allow the university to work with others to develop more residences on campus, to invest in the sporting commons and the health precinct, and to foster growth in an innovation precinct on the campus. The planned campus improvements will help in attracting more students, academics, researchers and tourists to the territory and will further establish the ACT as the destination of choice for people in the higher education and research sectors considering relocating from interstate or overseas.

This bill marks an important first step in a significant economic development agenda for Canberra. Our city has very few comparative advantages. We are a small economy and we simply must take these opportunities. The higher education sector is one of the biggest contributors to the ACT economy and has significant potential for growth in high quality jobs that lead to better outcomes for our community.

Frankly, it is astounding that the Liberal Party seek to oppose this legislation today. But then, given their record federally and all of their attempts to destroy the University of Canberra through the deregulation agenda that Minister Pyne has been pursuing at a national level—fortunately failed now twice—our approach, the approach of the ACT government, stands in marked contrast. We are for higher education. We are for jobs growth for Canberra. We are for more national and international investment opportunities for this city. We want to see our higher education sector thrive and we are putting in place the policy framework to allow that to occur.

Our approach stands in marked contrast to those opposite, who have no vision for one of the most significant industries in this city, one of the largest employers. One in nine Canberrans either works or studies at one of our higher education institutions. This is a critical industry for this territory and one that deserves to be supported through this bill today. That those opposite are not supporting it is a disgrace. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Clauses 1 to 4, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 5.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.04): I will be opposing this clause.

Question put:

That clause 5 be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 7	
Mr Barr	Mr Corbell	Mr Coe	Ms Lawder
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 9, by leave, taken together.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.07): I will be opposing these clauses, Madam Assistant Speaker.

Question put:

That clauses 7 to 9 be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 7	
Mr Barr	Mr Corbell	Mr Coe	Ms Lawder
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter	Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Remainder of bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Domestic Animals (Breeding) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

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

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.09): The opposition will be supporting the passing of the Domestic Animals (Breeding) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. In essence, this bill creates two different mechanisms to help stamp out inappropriate breeding practices for cats and dogs in the territory. The bill is not intended to punish legitimate breeders; instead it is intended to stop and punish those who would disregard animal welfare in order to make a commercial gain or profit.

Firstly, the bill allows the minister to declare a breeding standard. This standard will ensure that the health of a female cat and dog is maintained when they breed. It may specify, for example, at what age a dog can first start mating, at what age a cat or dog must be retired from breeding, or even the maximum number of litters a cat may have in a 12-month period. It is these standards which will maintain the welfare of cats and dogs as they are bred. I encourage the minister to develop and publish these standards as soon as possible after consultation with the industry so that all people, including stakeholders, know exactly where they stand. Importantly, sufficient penalties are in place for any person who recklessly or intentionally breaches the relevant breeding standard.

Secondly, the bill creates a licensing scheme for cat and dog breeders in the territory. Cat and dog breeders will now have to be licensed in order to breed in the territory. Again this will improve the welfare of breeding cats and dogs in the territory if it is policed appropriately. Perhaps more importantly, licensed breeders can now hold themselves up as such—as licensed. The community can have confidence when they purchase a cat or dog from a licensed breeder that the breeder is having regard to the welfare of the cat or dog’s mother, if indeed the regulations and legislation are enforced appropriately.

As with the breeding standard provisions, sufficient penalties apply to people who breed without a licence, and to breeders who advertise cats and dogs without including their licence number on the advertisement.

Finally, the bill also enables the minister to establish a code of practice surrounding the breeding and selling of cats and dogs with heritable defects. This will put animal welfare considerations at the forefront before any breeding occurs.

This bill will be supported by the opposition. It will provide better protection for cats and dogs while they breed but will allow legitimate breeders and animal welfare concerned breeders to continue about their work as breeders.

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) (4.12), in reply: I thank members for their support of this important bill today. When considering this bill, and indeed the other animal welfare amendments that I have introduced into the Assembly, I am reminded of a quote widely attributed to Mahatma Gandhi: “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Today members have the opportunity to legislate for the better treatment of dogs and cats in the ACT by banning puppy and kitten farming in the territory.

The offences and licensing scheme proposed by the bill target the intensive breeding of female dogs and cats in an attempt to protect both their health and welfare and that of their offspring. The bill thus seeks to avoid the serious animal welfare issues that we have seen in other states with intensive pet breeding operations that place the operator’s profit above their animals’ health or welfare.

Female dogs and cats in intensive breeding operations can have a very poor quality of life. They are often kept in inadequate conditions and treated purely as industrial breeding machines. To maximise their profits, some puppy and kitten farms use harmful drugs to cause their breeding animals to become pregnant as quickly as possible after they have had a litter. Female dogs and cats may be kept almost permanently pregnant, which of course places enormous stress on their bodies. As their fertility wanes and they become too old to produce commercially viable sized litters, they may be destroyed or abandoned.

There is harm, too, to the offspring bred in puppy and kitten farms. As a result of the poor conditions in which they are bred, the offspring are likely to suffer congenital defects, a weakened immune system and thus a shorter lifespan. They may also develop ongoing behavioural issues that arise from a lack of trust in their keepers.

This bill ensures that those seeking to breed dogs and cats in the territory will do so at appropriate intervals that do not harm their animals' health or welfare. In order to do this the bill criminalises the intensive breeding of female dogs and cats and introduces new penalties for people who exploit animals in breeding for the pet market. The bill also creates a licensing scheme for dog and cat breeders which will allow for the inspection of breeders' premises. Breeders will therefore need to be able to demonstrate that they are breeding their animals under adequate conditions.

Specifically, the bill amends the Animal Welfare Act 1992 to: insert an objects clause into the act; create an offence of recklessly breeding a female dog or cat contrary to a breeding standard declared by the minister; create a separate offence of breeding a female dog or cat contrary to a breeding standard declared by the minister, when done with the intention of making a profit or commercial gain; and explicitly provide that the minister may declare a code of practice on the breeding or selling of cats or dogs with heritable defects.

The bill also amends the Domestic Animals Act 2000 to create a breeding licensing scheme to be administered by the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services. To ensure compliance with the breeding licensing scheme, the bill creates a strict liability offence of breeding a litter from a dog or cat for profit or commercial gain without holding a breeding licence. Licensees will also be required to display their breeding licence number in any advertisements that they place for animals they have bred. That will assist Domestic Animal Services in conducting compliance checks.

The bill also creates other minor regulatory offences for licence holders, including failing to tell the registrar of a change of address and failing to surrender a breeding licence to the registrar after ceasing to operate a breeding business.

In order to ensure that the breeding licensing scheme protects animals but does not place an undue regulatory burden on legitimate breeders, targeted consultation was conducted during the bill's development. As I mentioned in my presentation speech, consultation occurred with the Pet Industry Association of Australia, the ACT Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, Dogs ACT, Capital Cats, the Australian Veterinary Association, and the RSPCA, both the ACT and Australian branches. I again thank those organisations for their constructive and valuable contributions to the bill.

I will take this opportunity to note some of the particular comments of key stakeholders. The RSPCA praised the new requirement that breeders display their licence number in advertisements for puppies and kittens, saying it finally puts the appropriate information in the hands of potential owners. If the consumer demand for backyard breeders goes away then the potential income and often deplorable practices of unrestrained breeding goes down. They said the bill not only puts proactive measures in place to reduce the risk of puppy and kitten farms in the territory but also gives consumers the information they need to make good decisions the next time they want to purchase a pet from a breeder.

Oscar's Law said that the legislation:

... is a great step forward for the ACT. The tougher legislation in Victoria means a lot of puppy farms are looking to relocate which is why it is so good the ACT has been quick off the mark in introducing this before parliament.

I think that is an important point. We do need to be mindful of our place on the Australian eastern seaboard in particular and the way the industry may operate in that area.

The ACT Pet Industry Association said that it welcomed the new legislation that will help end the irresponsible breeding of dogs and cats and it hoped that the same proposals were taken up by the governments in other states.

Since the bill's introduction, many members of the public have also told me just how strongly they feel about the issue of puppy and kitten farms, and I share and empathise with their concerns. I am heartened that many of my colleagues in the Assembly—in fact, all of my colleagues—similarly appear to share the public's concerns on this issue.

I am particularly pleased with the new licensing scheme because this will empower consumers to play an important role in making choices. Just today, I have seen a new video from Animals Australia which has graphic footage particularly of puppy farms in Australia. It highlights the importance of the Assembly taking action on this issue. Giving consumers power and information to make wise choices, as the Animals Australia campaign suggests, is a particularly positive aspect of this legislation.

Dogs and cats in puppy and kitten farms have no voice. Here, today, members are helping to give those dogs and cats a voice. Here, today, members are saying that puppy and kitten farming is a cruel, inhumane and unacceptable practice and one that will not be tolerated in the territory. I thank members for their support of this important bill.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (4.20), by leave: I thank members for the chance to talk about this very important domestic animal bill. I am sure that everyone is aware of the interest I have in animal welfare, having worked closely with the government in relation to the mandatory code governing the sale of domestic animals, and I spoke on the Animal Welfare (Factory Farming) Amendment Bill 2013.

I have raised the important issue of the stress on older people and their pets when the owner is moving into a retirement village or an aged-care residential facility and is faced with separation from his or her much loved pet. I have also been working to support a group that aims to establish a volunteer program to assist people to care for their pets at home when they, or perhaps their pet, become frail.

More recently I have had a correspondence exchange between my office and the minister's office regarding several animal welfare matters that I would like to see addressed in the near future. I believe this bill goes some way to addressing some of these issues.

Many of these concerns and ideas are presented to me by constituents at my regular mobile offices, while others are raised by various stakeholders. In particular the fallout from the greyhound live-baiting matter generated an additional amount of correspondence around these kinds of issues.

It is always good to see this Assembly being very proactive in tackling animal welfare matters. The introduction of this bill today, and others such as the Animal Welfare (Factory Farming) Amendment Bill 2013, both of which outlaw undesirable factory-type practices in the ACT, are good examples. In particular, this bill addresses the detrimental effects on dogs and cats that the minister mentioned.

I am not aware of any puppy farms in the ACT; indeed, I believe there are none of the other practices that were addressed in the Animal Welfare (Factory Farming) Amendment Bill 2013. However, we all agree it is important for this Assembly to continue to show leadership and to enact measures to stop such activities from ever being practised here in the ACT. By eliminating cruel and inhumane practices, we are upholding both the dignity of the animal and our own dignity.

As with the previous bill, the Domestic Animal (Breeding) Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will ensure that anyone found engaging in one of these practices in the ACT will be subject to the stipulated penalties.

Of particular importance to me is the issue of a breeding licence. I am glad to see that some thought has been given to this area in sections 72A to 72I. Enforcing the need to have a licence will ensure that breeders meet animal welfare standards, including the number and kind of animals kept, the size and nature of premises and their suitability, potential impact on neighbours, and a conviction or finding of guilt of an applicant, just to name a few. I believe this goes a long way to stamping out unethical breeding practices, which is the aim of the bill.

Of particular concern, and one that I have aired before, is what action should be taken to ensure that puppies that are bred interstate do not find their way into the ACT—a concern that is complicated by our unique geographical location. Section 72J, “Breeding—recognised breeding organisation”, is a step in the right direction. I am very interested to see the impact of this section, as it introduces the concept of a reputable breeder, which is something I have wanted to see introduced for a long time. As with the ongoing discourse about food labelling, having a reputable breeder gives

a buyer the necessary confidence, when buying a pet, that the animal they are purchasing has been bred and reared correctly and does not have any existing health issues.

Section 72K takes into account the requirements for breeders to have a breeder's licence number included in any advertisement they put out for the purpose of making a sale, which, over time, will encourage buyers to make better and more informed choices. This is another issue I have promoted to the minister before, and, again, I am glad to see this included in the bill.

I am committed to domestic animal welfare reform, and I am very pleased to support this matter today. I thank members for their indulgence in allowing me to speak.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Adjournment

Motion by **Mr Barr** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Tommy Balogh

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.25): Madam Assistant Speaker, I rise to acknowledge local up and coming artist Tommy Balogh, whom I recently had the chance to meet at his first solo exhibition at the MI6 Artspace called *Alchemists' Paradise*. Tommy is a graduate of the ANU School of Arts, He is a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours). He subsequently won the EASS prize and the KPMG purchase prize in 2011. As part of his prize he had an exhibition at the Alliance Francaise, which led to the successful sale of his first large glass panel work.

After a four-year hiatus, he became part of the 2014 annual group exhibition at the Stur-Frye Gallery in Braidwood, New South Wales. He was also invited to the HUE Exhibition at Nishi Gallery in New Action, Canberra, in December last year.

Tommy is currently preparing a permanent collection of paintings at the Belconnen Premier Hotel and Apartments. As a university student, I think Tommy was cognisant of the fact that often being an artist does not pay the bills. So he actually came to my office as an intern with the practical goal of being a policy analyst long term. But art is clearly his passion. He is clearly very, very good at it. It was great to see that he has chosen to pursue this. I thank MI6 for giving him the opportunity to have his solo exhibition.

At his latest exhibition, it was wonderful to see the present artistic development and the maturity of his work and the way that he uses colour. He has taken to using perspex in this case rather than a canvas or glass. On one of the perspex paintings he was describing to me, he said he wanted to get the blackest colour that he could get, the greatest intensity of black. In the end he was using bitumen rather than paint. The way he had done it on the acrylic was most striking. So I would just like to bring Tommy to the attention of members and of the ACT community as one of our up and coming home-grown ACT artists to look out for in the future.

Legislative Assembly—artworks

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.27): I rise briefly to make some observations about the impressive collection of artwork “The art of truth, compassion, tolerance” that is currently on display in the ACT Legislative Assembly. This work has been supported by Holly Wei and her colleagues. I thank them for bringing this significant work to the Assembly.

We had a brief opening event last Thursday lunchtime. Mr Coe attended and Mr Hanson also attended. I saw Ms Berry come through at one point as well. What we see with this exhibition is indicative of the passion and dedication of the community of Falun Gong practitioners, not just here in Canberra but around the world, and of course in their home country, China.

The exhibition speaks to their perseverance in continuing to advocate for the universal human values of truth, compassion and tolerance, values that Falun Gong hold dear, as do members of the Greens, who have long spoken with, listened to and supported members of the Falun Gong community.

These values have been greatly tested, with Falun Gong experiencing persecution by the government in China, their home country. The human rights abuses that continue to be perpetrated in the People’s Republic of China are well documented. I will not go into the detail about that now. Instead, I would like to draw attention to the works themselves, as they are strongly evocative of the experience of those who have faced and who continue to face such persecution.

The artworks are a moving response to their struggle. Speaking more broadly, the works raised themes of hope and courage in the face of injustice and persecution, which is of relevance to people all around the world who are persecuted and discriminated against for their religion, ethnicity or beliefs.

At a personal level, I find the exhibition quite affecting. Despite the sadness of some works, there is a great deal of energy and hopefulness, as well as a palpable sense of courage that can be drawn from an understanding of our shared human dignity.

I would like to thank Holly Wei and members of the Falun Gong community for sharing the exhibition with the public through the ACT Assembly. I am pleased to have been able to sponsor the exhibition. I thank other members for coming to the launch the other day. I would encourage those members who have not had a chance to

have a look at the works to stop by, as they are literally right here on our doorstep. I encourage them to take the time to have a look at a few of the inscriptions that go with them as well.

Walk for Tara

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.30): Thousands in our community—individuals and organisations—supported the commemoration of the life of Tara Costigan on Sunday, showing the depth of feeling about her tragic story. Being part of the Walk for Tara was a very moving experience for all of us. It was a heartfelt response to her death and a call for every one of us to do all we can to prevent a similar fate befalling others. It is also a reminder of the dreadful toll such a death takes on those around the victim—the family, the friends, the range of communities we belong to and, indeed, the whole community, which is poorer because this can happen here.

Every woman or family living under a threat of violence will be chilled to hear of another victim dying at the hands of another person. Every incident or threat of violence can corrode the victim's mental and physical health, their sense of security and confidence. It corrodes their right to live a life free from fear, intimidation and violence. Tragically, recent events show how far we have to go to ensure the safety of women from violence.

Many of the men in this Assembly, including me, are involved in the White Ribbon movement to address men's entrenched attitudes to violence against women. The campaign is something we have to work on every day and spread its message beyond the already converted. We need to talk to men and let them know it is not okay to spread the casual sexism, the jokes and worse that can reinforce negative attitudes to women.

The message is: violence against women is everyone's business. We need more good men to say enough is enough and raise the issue in public and through our networks. The campaign is about education and prevention. Sadly, it is when prevention fails and we are reminded of the human consequences of that terrible violence that we know our current efforts are not enough. We need to maintain awareness to stop this failure on the part of men and act to stop the violence on every day of every year, not just on White Ribbon Day in November. When prevention fails and women are subject to threats or actual violence, it is essential we have effective, well-funded, well-publicised support services, such as the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Women's Legal Centre.

I know senior police in the AFP are committed to ending violence towards women, speaking out about it and ensuring that the force proactively tackles the issue. However, we need to overcome the attitudes of men that can lead to violence, preventing threats before police become involved. White Ribbon Australia released a survey of young people just today. The CEO, Libby Davies, noted the survey shows that young people have a good awareness of domestic violence, but it also shows that some young people, particularly young men, hold attitudes that support gender stereotypes that lead to violence against women. At the top of White Ribbon's list of practical things for men to do is listen to women, learn from women. It is a very good starting point.

Mr John Miller

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.33): I rise this afternoon to speak about a notable Canberran—John Miller. John Miller was originally from Ballarat in Victoria but has spent 35 years living in Canberra. While he still has an affinity for Victoria, John is now well and truly a Canberra local. John has been the CEO of the Master Builders Association of the ACT since June 2007. The MBA ACT is one of the largest industry bodies in the territory. The association represents over 1,200 members in the building and construction industry, including members who are residential builders, commercial builders, civil contractors, subcontractors, trade contractors and suppliers and professional consultants.

During John's time as executive director, the MBA has been actively involved in providing advice and recommendations to the government and opposition and other relevant bodies. The MBA always provides detailed submissions to government consultations. The opposition have been particularly thankful for John and the rest of the MBA's willingness to provide us with information about the real-world impacts of policy changes made in this place.

Under John's leadership the MBA has also produced five policy papers setting out its formal position on industry issues. The procurement and land and planning policy papers have been made publically available, and I understand that papers about building quality, safety and training are nearly complete.

Prior to his role at the MBA, John was the Executive Director of the Canberra Business Council between 2002 and 2007. John is also involved with a number of community organisations, including as a board member of the OzHelp Foundation and Cricket ACT, a trustee of the AFL Canberra Foundation and a member of the Heritage Council. He was also appointed an honorary ambassador for Canberra in 2004.

As members will be aware, John is moving on from the MBA at the end of this month. On behalf of the opposition, I place on record our thanks to John for all his work for the Canberra community. We are all grateful for John's willingness to share his expertise and extensive knowledge of the industry. I wish John and his family all the best for the future and congratulate him on his significant achievements while at the MBA.

Valley ponds

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (4.35): Today I rise to inform the house of the recent launch of the valley ponds in Gungahlin and thank the Minister for the Environment for the opportunity to be present at the launch. The valley ponds are part of some very valuable natural resources in this rapidly growing area of our city, including, especially, Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarloo nature reserve as well as parts of the magnificent Centenary Trail. As we see such significant urban development around the Gungahlin region, it is vitally important we are also able to have sites like the valley ponds which not only improve our environment but also educate our community about the importance of natural habitat.

The design of the valley ponds project began in mid-2010, with construction beginning in early 2012. The project has multiple aims, including to improve the quality of the natural environment as well as to encourage recreational and volunteer opportunities for the Gungahlin community. It also aims to educate the community on the rich cultural history of the ponds area.

The valley ponds area is considered to be one of high heritage and cultural significance. It is an area with strong Indigenous links, with the tributary flowing into the ponds area demonstrating many signs of early Aboriginal occupation. There is also evidence of the importance that the waterway held for the Aboriginal community, using boats and other instruments to use the area for food and transport. The area has also been of colonial historical importance, being the home of the Gribble family, one of the founding families of the Gungahlin region.

Environmentally, the project has modified what was a degraded natural waterway that neglected to protect the water quality of the Gungahlin ponds into a waterway that has improved water quality. At the valley ponds, polluted water from the Gungahlin town centre and surrounds is captured; pollutants are removed in the wetlands. The water then flows into Gungahlin pond, subsequently into Lake Ginninderra and eventually into the Murrumbidgee River. The construction of this pond has meant that the quality of stormwater has been improved by around 60 per cent. Stormwater harvesting is another achievement of the valley ponds project, and the stormwater captured in the lowest ponds is used for the irrigation of the enclosed oval.

I would like to acknowledge the investment of the ACT government in providing funding to this incredible project. In the 2009-10 budget, \$6.5 million in funding was provided to the project. I would like to thank the Environment and Planning Directorate for their thorough work in constructing the ponds to such a high standard.

It was my pleasure to open the valley ponds on Friday, 20 March. I would like to acknowledge the principals and students of Burgmann Anglican School and Gungahlin College, some of whom attended and have been involved with the project since 2010. I would also like to acknowledge the Birrale Scout Group for their active participation in the project.

For the Gungahlin community, the development of the valley ponds will offer volunteering and recreational opportunities for the community to participate in. In terms of volunteering, groups such as Greening Australia and Conservation Volunteers Australia have been involved and will continue to be involved with weed removal and planting. Key stakeholders such as the local schools and scout group will have use of an outdoor learning space. The location of the space allows easy collection of water and species samples. Within the classroom, Ngunnawal names of wetland animals are used, and there are signs around the wetlands with information on the Indigenous and colonial history of the area.

The valley ponds are an important development for the Gungahlin area that has delivered on multiple fronts. The environmental development of the valley ponds is an important step in preserving the environment in our local community. Further, the

educational value attributed to the outdoor learning space is significant for all. As a result, the valley ponds project improves the quality of the ecological habitat and community spirit. I encourage all members to visit the valley ponds and see the improvements for themselves.

Daramalan College

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.39): On Friday, 13 March 2015 Daramalan College hosted two major events. During the day close to 1,500 students and staff took part in the annual charity walk around Lake Burley Griffin to raise funds for St Vincent de Paul and Caritas Australia. The event is a major activity of the parents and friends association and the staff were greatly assisted on the day by a large number of parents who helped out at checkpoints as well as on the barbecue and drink stands to feed the hungry runners and walkers at the end of the course. I understand that close to \$30,000 was raised from the charity walk around Lake Burley Griffin for St Vincent de Paul.

That evening, I had the pleasure of attending the Daramalan College official opening of the Littleton extension, which houses a number of new facilities, including a large self-serve canteen, a new years 11 and 12 common room and a flexible learning space that can seat 200 people.

The impressive addition to the Daramalan College infrastructure, the Littleton extension, was named in honour of Father James Littleton. Father Jim is a Missionaries of the Sacred Heart priest and has been a member of the college board since its inception in 1962. Father Jim was the principal of Daramalan College from 1971 to 1979, and returned to the staff in 1998 as assistant to the principal until he retired. He is currently chair of the policy review committee and a member of the governance committee and building, development and facilities committee.

He has been principal of three Missionaries of the Sacred Heart schools over a period of 20 years and has been the delegate of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Provincial on the boards of the four MSC schools in Australia—Chevalier College, Bowral, New South Wales; Daramalan College, Dickson, ACT; Downlands College, Toowoomba, Queensland; and Monivae College, Hamilton, Victoria. Father Jim holds a Bachelor of Religious Studies, a Bachelor of Arts from the University of New England and a Master of Arts (Education) from the University of San Francisco. He is a Fellow of the Australian College of Education.

At this event the college also launched its scholarship fund, which is aimed at providing a number of students from financially disadvantaged families with the opportunity to attend the college. Three former students of the college from different eras spoke at the event—Michael Kelly, who was one of the early pioneer students of Daramalan; Adrienne Day-Hodge, who was amongst the first female students to be accepted when Daramalan became a co-ed school; and George Southwell, who completed year 12 in 2014. It was fascinating to hear these former students' experiences at Daramalan and how these have had a lasting influence on their lives.

The fund was then officially launched by the college board chair, Michael Jamieson. Several people with close connections to the college have already contributed to the fund, which Daramalan College hope to grow with some major fundraising events over the coming years.

Officiating at this proud event was one of the senior principals of Catholic education in Canberra, Rita Daniels, the current principal of Daramalan College. She began her teaching career with the New South Wales Department of Education before returning to Canberra late in 1979, when she was first employed at Daramalan as a teacher of English. Over the next 20 years at Daramalan Rita had a variety of roles. She was appointed to the role of studies adviser and later assistant principal, curriculum, for years 11 and 12, a position she held for 11 years. In 2001 Rita Daniels was appointed principal of St Clare's College in Griffith, ACT, a position she held until the end of 2008. In 2007 Rita held the position of acting principal of MacKillop Catholic College in Tuggeranong.

Rita Daniels has been a member of many committees associated with education in the ACT, including the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies and the Catholic Education Commission for the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese. She is currently a member of the Company of the Australian Catholic University as a nominee of the Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn. She has also been active in professional groups for principals, including Principals Australia and the Catholic Secondary Principals Association.

Rita Daniels was affiliated with Daramalan College from 1979 to 2000 as a staff member, and she began her term as principal of Daramalan College in 2009. Congratulations to Daramalan College, principal Rita Daniels and her college board and college community for their contribution to Canberra education since 1962.

Deep Space Communication Complex

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.44): Last week I attended a lunch at the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex at Tidbinbilla in honour of its 50th anniversary. Originally known as the Tidbinbilla Deep Space Instrument Facility, and occasionally called the Tidbinbilla space tracking station, CDSCC was opened on 19 March 1965 by then Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies. It was developed for communicating with deep space probes and to support early manned missions. It supported every Apollo lunar mission and handled telemetry, command and control communications for the landings of NASA's twin Mars rovers, *Spirit* and *Opportunity*. It was one of three tracking stations in the ACT; the others, which have since been decommissioned, being Honeysuckle Creek and Orroral Valley.

Contrary to popular belief through the movie *The Dish*, the Parkes radio telescope did not provide the vision of Neil Armstrong stepping down onto the surface of the moon—that video link came through Parkes and through Honeysuckle Creek, although the antenna DSS46, which was used in the moon landing, was later moved to Tidbinbilla. The two Voyager spacecraft continue to be in contact with earth through Tidbinbilla's 70-metre dish, known as Deep Space Station 43 or DSS43, which is the largest steerable antenna in the southern hemisphere. It has supported the Magellan and Galileo missions, the Hubble space telescope and many more missions.

Tidbinbilla is one of three NASA tracking stations equidistantly located around the world, featuring giant radio antennas that relay commands to and receive data from dozens of spacecraft exploring the sun, planets, moons, comets and asteroids of our solar system. The other two stations are located near Madrid in Spain and at Goldstone in California in the USA. In the past the tracking station was run under contract to the Australian government by private companies, including AWA and British Aerospace Australia, and is now run by CSIRO. The tracking station is currently gearing up for the July arrival of NASA's *New Horizons* spacecraft, which will take our first close-up views of Pluto.

A large number of current and past staff attended the anniversary. At risk of leaving many of them out, I acknowledge the contribution made by many Canberrans to our knowledge of deep space and our surrounding planets. I acknowledge the following, who are just a small subset of those who have worked at the tracking station over the past 50 years: Jeff Appleton, Peter Badowski, Shane Badowski, Allan Bailey, Candy Bailey, Laurie Bailey, Graham Baines, Miriam Baltuck, Marisa Cappello, Peter Churchill, Gordon Clee, Angela Corujo, Frank Corujo, Barry Davis, Mike Dinn, Bill Dobie, Jim Duncan, John Dunn, Lionel Franks, Chris Hall, Paul Harbison, John Harter, Garry Hobbs, Paul Hutchinson, Richard Jacobsen, John Johnson, Jim Kirkpatrick, Kevin Knights, Len Litherland, John Murray, Ross Murray, Glen Nagle, Kate Noonan, Terry Neuendorf, Penny Neuendorf, Jim O'Brien, Dennis O'Brien, Basilio Ormeno, Gary Pearson, Fran Purbrick, Bob Quick, Len Ricardo, Ana Ross, Tony Ross, John Saxon, Trevor Smith, Taryn Smith, Richard Stephenson, Pam Takanen, Ron Tollasep, Barry Unsworth, Nikki Unsworth, Kendra Wells, Kevin Wells and Mark Wombwell.

I look forward to hearing more about the outstanding space exploration work into the future from the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex. You can find out more at cdscc.nasa.gov.

Education—Canberra College Cares program

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (4.48): I would like to compliment Ms Porter for her question yesterday in relation to CCCares and compliment the government and the department for the great advances that have been made in CCCares over the years. It was a great pleasure to attend the opening of CCCares a couple of weeks ago and to see the great advances that have been made since 2004 when I first visited CCCares at Stirling in a very cold and bleak set-up.

Over time, through grants—the Commonwealth Bank grant that was talked about today and the social inclusion grants—it was possible to build up the facility to demonstrate quite clearly the need that was there for an organisation like CCCares and also how well CCCares has worked for young people who juggle school and parenting, and for their children. It is a great testament to the leadership of Canberra College, to John Stenhouse and his staff, who had the foresight many years ago to institute CCCares, and to the myriad community organisations who participate in the program.

I think it is something that those of us who have watched it grow can be proud of. I think it is a great testament to the staff who currently operate there. It is a great sign of hope for the future. I do congratulate the department and the government on their active participation. Although it took a long time to really get off the ground, it is now great to see the facilities that we saw open the other day, which are, as I said, a great step forward from where they were in 2004.

Just on a slightly sour note, I thought it was a little disappointing that the minister could not acknowledge the presence of other MLAs at the opening of CCCares. I also hope that it is not a sign of things to come that I am starting to notice, in relation to Minister Burch's portfolios, that members on this side are not receiving invitations to events—for instance, the turning of the sod at the Aranda Emergency Services Agency headquarters last week. This was not the practice under the previous minister.

I hope that this was an oversight that Minister Burch failed to acknowledge other members who were present at the opening but, as the minister is wont to say, the dominos are in her court.

Economy—infrastructure

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (4.50): Over the past few years the territory has punched above its weight in attracting and securing new investment. I think one of the most visible examples of that is just down the road from this place at the airport. The new terminal, which I think every Canberran can be proud of, is the result of a \$480 million investment. Soon we will all be able to see the results of the further investment of \$50 million when a new 4.5-star hotel opens, providing around 600 direct and indirect jobs for our economy.

It takes a lot of trust to invest over half a billion dollars in our economy. We will see more results of the trust investors have in our economy and in the territory government when IKEA opens its doors here in Canberra in October. This \$36 million investment will create an additional 280 jobs for Canberrans.

Even closer to us here, just down Constitution Avenue, is the Campbell 5 site. This is a parcel of land that sold for more than \$63 million to a consortium made up of local and new international investors. This is an investment in Canberra that will see up to 520 residential apartments, commercial offices, hotels and parkland created. Even closer to us yet, at the end of last year we saw Aquis invest in Canberra with their \$6 million purchase of the Canberra casino.

These investments from overseas have not come by accident. The government have been working hard to sell Canberra around the country and around the world. We have participated in numerous investment and bond meetings in Melbourne, Sydney, Singapore, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Tokyo and Shenzhen.

We have seen the strength of trust in this government in the quality of participants in our capital metro project. The industry briefing that Minister Corbell and I hosted last year saw over 370 people from more than 250 organisations flock here to find out more about how they can invest in our economy and our future. They did not just come from around Australia or from around the region. They came from around the world to be involved in this project.

It is testament to the territory's attractiveness to investors that so many nationally and internationally respected companies wanted to be involved in this project from the beginning. Because of our hard-won reputation as a reliable destination for investment, the government could choose from four world-class consortia for the delivery of the first stage of Canberra's light rail network.

The two consortia that we have shortlisted include some of the world's best rail and infrastructure businesses, alongside local champions. The first stage of our city's light rail network will deliver more than 3,500 jobs during construction and more than \$1 billion of benefits to our economy.

Together with the legislation that we have passed today to support the University of Canberra's growth, we are supporting investment in our economy. This means, Mr Assistant Speaker, opportunity for business, opportunity for workers and opportunity for our community.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.54 pm.