



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

5 MAY 2015

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Tuesday, 5 May 2015

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

Petition

*The following petition was lodged for presentation, by **Mr Coe**, from 166 residents:*

Planning—Giralang shops—petition No 3-15

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

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly that Giralang has been without local shops for a decade.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to express their support for the completion, without further delay, of the full approved development of the shops currently under construction. Further we call on the Assembly to enact legislation, if necessary, to limit further legal appeal by those opposing the development.

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.

Ministerial response

The Clerk: The following response to a petition has been lodged by a minister:

By **Mr Rattenbury**, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, dated 1 May 2015, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Doszpot on 24 March 2015 concerning a public transport system from the parliamentary triangle to the business areas of Manuka and Kingston during the peak lunch period.

The terms of the response will be recorded in *Hansard*.

Transport—public—petition No 2-15

The response read as follows:

The new ACTION Bus Network 14 commenced on Monday 1 September 2014.

Since the introduction of Network 14, Public Transport has been monitoring the network using performance data available from the MyWay and NXTBUS systems and identifying areas for improvement.

Currently there are ten services to and from the Parliamentary Triangle to both Kingston and Manuka shops, operating as frequently as every 15 minutes, between 12:00pm and 2:30pm weekdays except on public holidays.

Based on performance and patronage data, there are no plans to make any adjustment to these current services under the revised timetable review that will be implemented on 18 May 2015.

Performance of bus services to Manuka will however be kept under review in consultation with the Manuka Business Association.

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee Report 5

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

Health, Ageing, Community and Social Services—Standing Committee—Report 5—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2013-14*, dated May 2015, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

The annual and financial reports were referred to standing committees on 25 September 2014. This committee considered the ACT government Health Directorate annual report, as well as the majority of the Community Services Directorate annual report, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, multicultural affairs, women, disability and therapy services, care and protection, community services, housing, and ageing.

The committee held four public hearings, on 6, 7 and 20 November last year and 26 February 2015, and heard from the relevant ministers and accompanying officials. Thirty-two questions were taken on notice, which have all been responded to and are available on the committee's web page.

A number of the recommendations relate to setting key performance indicators, data collection and reporting concerns. In Health, the committee recommends that the ACT government consider annual benchmarking for emergency department timeliness against peer group hospitals. Whilst it is necessary for the Health Directorate to report against the national targets, there appears to be an opportunity for the ACT to undertake additional benchmarking against peer group hospitals to provide a more accurate indication of how ACT emergency department timeliness is faring compared to the other jurisdictions.

The committee believes that the timeliness of non-elective surgery is also an important indicator of hospital performance and is concerned that this data is not measured in a manner to facilitate reporting and year-to-year comparisons of

performance. Therefore, the committee has recommended that the ACT government look to revise its information systems in order to facilitate the recording and reporting of timeliness measures for non-elective surgery.

The committee also recommends that the ACT government consider establishing targets to measure how effectively the diversion to other healthcare and human services management programs is working to reduce frequent re-presentation at emergency departments.

In relation to the Community Services Directorate, the committee recommends that CSD develop key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of seniors programs funded through government grants. It also recommends that the ACT government report on re-substantiation rates for child protection reports in future Community Services Directorate annual reports. Apparently this data is already tracked but is not currently reported. That data would help complete the picture around child concern reporting.

In relation to data collection, the committee recommends that the ACT government consider better ways of collecting data in relation to contacts with the Women's Information and Referral Centre so as to provide better future reporting of outreach and other types of contacts through the centre.

In other health-related matters, the committee recommended that the ACT government undertake additional efforts to ensure that hospital staff comply with handwashing guidelines. The committee heard that the Health Directorate has established education campaigns for staff and patients, as well as audit processes, but was advised that the compliance with handwashing requirements was better amongst some occupational groups than others. The committee noted that although the ACT exceeded the national target of 70 per cent, there is still significant room for improvement.

The committee also made a range of recommendations relating to awareness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, transport information for seniors, communication around indexation of community grants, improving tenant satisfaction in community facilities, numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care, foster care availability, and involvement in the human services blueprint by frequent re-presentation patients.

In conclusion, the committee thanks the ministers and directorate officials for their time and cooperation during the inquiry. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members—Mr Wall, Ms Lawder and Ms Fitzharris, as well as Ms Berry, who was a member of the committee during this inquiry. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 12

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.07): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 12—*Inquiry into Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Amendment Bill 2014*, dated 4 May 2015, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

The Assembly referred this bill to the public accounts committee following some discussions we had between members on 26 March as a way forward. The committee has done the task assigned to it by the Assembly. In the course of that consideration of the bill and the production of this report, we are grateful that the Chief Minister found some time to come and meet with the committee and have some discussion about the intent of the government's amendments and how the bill might move forward. We also received a submission from the Auditor-General, as this would impact on her as well.

We then proceeded to produce the report. Indeed, in what perhaps is a first, the public accounts committee in its entirety was in Adelaide for the biennial meeting of the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees, so during one lunchtime we had a committee meeting in Adelaide and passed the draft report. I thank members for their efforts in coming prepared to do that in distant Adelaide.

The committee has made four recommendations. There was, in a general sense, some concern about the loss of information, and the loss of the integrity of the entirety of the report of the activities of a particular directorate in a year. Often material is to be found in several sources, and one of the recommendations goes to this. I will speak to this shortly. But if your own interest is, for instance, just in the department of health, you do not want to be going to this report, that report and somebody else's report on a different website to find the information that really should paint the entire picture of the activities of the agency for the previous year. So recommendation 1 is:

The Committee recommends that appropriate amendments be made to the Annual Reports ... Amendment Bill 2014 ... to ensure that any data specific and/or relevant to understanding the performance of a particular directorate or agency be:

- a. disaggregated from whole-of-government reporting to present an accurate picture of an entity's performance; and
- b. also reported in the relevant directorate or agency annual report.

Many people will go to one document. This is about presenting an entire picture in one place. Recommendation 2 is:

The Committee recommends that, to the extent that work is not already taking place, the Exposure Draft ... be amended to: (i) provide further information on the reporting requirements that will apply in 2016—an election year; or (ii) amend the draft Directions to apply to the 2014-15 reporting period only.

There were concerns that if the government amendments were to pass, of course, it would take it beyond the election that will occur on the third Saturday in September next year. Again, annual reports paint a picture of the government's management of the portfolios and it is important that, particularly in the lead-up to an election, the information is on the table as to how they have performed.

That goes to recommendation 3. Because of the limited time that we had, we did have material from the Auditor-General, and following the PAC's meeting with the Chief Minister we received further correspondence from him. So as late as yesterday we were amending some of the report, as a letter arrived on 24 April. In it the Chief Minister said:

Annual Reports will ... be tabled 15 weeks after the end of the financial year. As in past election years Reports will be signed by caretaker Ministers and tabled after elections.

That is quoted at paragraph 4.26 of the report. We go on to say:

The majority of the Committee is still of the view that the presentation date for annual reports should remain at 30 September.

We then go on to say, at paragraph 4.27:

The Committee also notes comment from the Auditor-General that:

The Audit Office considers that the reasons provided in the explanatory statement for extending the timeframe are not sufficient to warrant an extension to the submission date for annual reports. In particular ... the claim in the explanatory statement that 'three months does not provide sufficient time between the audit and submission of annual reports' is not consistent with the results of audit work on the timeliness of annual reports.

The Auditor-General's entire submission appears at appendix D of the report, if people want to read it. Quite clearly, the auditor believes that it can be done and that, consistent with the results of the timeliness, it has been done. With that in mind, recommendation 3 reads:

The Committee recommends that the reporting date for presentation of annual reports remain at 30 September.

I think there is some importance to this. You have only to look at the fact that Dr Bourke has just tabled a report from his committee regarding an inquiry into last year's annual reports, and here we are in May. If we push from September back to the end of October, or any date later, it just continues to push it back. We get a build-up of work towards the end of the year, and then, with Christmas leave and school holidays, there is a period when public servants, and indeed ministers, are not available to discuss these things. If we want to get some value out of the annual reports and the annual report hearings undertaken by the standing committees in this place, it is important that they are done in a timely manner. That, of course, can only start when the annual reports are tabled. The fourth recommendation is:

The Committee recommends that the annual reports of ACT Government directorates and agencies continue to include detail on relevant government contract expenditure for the reporting period under review.

The Chief Minister came back and said—and I quote from paragraph 4.39:

The Annual Reports will contain the print out from the Contracts Register on an annual year basis. The information won't be reformatted and will have the relevant financial year included.

That is fantastic, and the committee thanks the Chief Minister for addressing its concern in that regard. So there is the report, Madam Speaker, as requested by the Assembly. It makes some reasonable recommendations. Much of it is in favour of the status quo, with a few tweaks. With that, I refer the report to the Assembly.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.14): As a member of the public accounts committee, I would like to place on the record that while I agreed substantially with the report as presented by my colleague and chair of the committee, Mr Smyth, I did have some difficulty throughout deliberations going to the question of red tape reduction and efficiency in government processes, which gave me pause to think about the efficiency of committee processes. Indeed, paragraph 4.38 of the report reflects the discussion that the committee had. It reads:

The Committee discussed that reporting across multiple platforms could create unnecessary duplication. The Committee notes the need to balance transparency with the efficient operation of the ACT Government and its directorates to be responsive to: (a) the community by providing information in real time through the searchable online contracts database; and (b) the Legislative Assembly and its committees for the purposes of appropriate scrutiny. The Committee discussed the need to continue to think carefully about the appropriate balance between the increasing real time availability of government information online, the scrutiny processes of the Assembly, and the desire to reduce duplication and red tape across government activity.

Really, what this discussion was about, in my view, was, as Mr Smyth also just noted, the timeliness of committee reports. It is not just a matter for annual reporting processes; it does in fact go to the question of the efficiency of how committees operate and perhaps what the community expects of the Assembly. The community now have access to real-time information at their fingertips—for example, through the searchable online contracts database which was discussed at length by the committee and is reflected in the annual report bill.

The fact that the community can have real-time information available to them anywhere, at any time of the day, to search online government information, the fact that there is a significant amount of government information available, particularly through the open government initiative of this government, really calls into question whether the processes of the committees are keeping up with the processes of the wider community and what the community expects. We flagged in the committee and discussed the need, in my view, to take fairly close account of this, as that information

and as databases become more sophisticated and there is more information available to the community. That is a question that I think committees need to keep at the forefront of their minds: how they remain relevant and timely in the face of these new technological developments.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 31

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 31, dated 28 April 2015, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 31 contains the committee's comments on six bills, three pieces of subordinate legislation and two government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Dr Bourke**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Porter for this sitting week due to health reasons.

Education—teaching quality 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) (10.18), by leave: The quality and capabilities of the teaching workforce remain a priority for our government and governments across the country. For more than six years, under the improving teacher quality national partnership, the ACT government have joined with our state and federal counterparts to develop regulatory frameworks and policies directed towards improving teacher quality in our schools. Established research has shown repeatedly, in a range of different settings and countries, that teacher quality is one of the most influential in-school factors affecting outcomes for students across all sectors of schooling.

International comparisons have also shown that the outcomes for Australian students have not kept pace with those in societies regarded as our peers. Why should we care about this? As I have often said in this Assembly, every child should have the right to

the best education we can provide, regardless of their background, location or school setting. We care about these things so that our future citizens can not only compete effectively on the world stage as economic contributors but also lead productive, socially engaged and fulfilling lives in a vibrant democratic society.

I am sure we can all agree that the central importance of teachers to our children's educational achievements is undisputed, as is the importance of the quality of our teaching profession as a whole to the achievement of internationally competitive student outcomes. So what practical measures to improve teacher quality have resulted from all of this?

The principal focus has been on raising the bar for the professionalisation of teaching. The development of national standards for the teaching profession and establishing those standards as the basis for minimum qualifications for entry into the profession and for continued professional practice and development of teachers have provided sound foundations for continued improvements that can be measured.

All professions share a common set of characteristics. They bring together a committed group of people bound by common codes of ethics and professional practice, a shared and established body of knowledge and practice, and a commitment to sustain and develop that body of knowledge for the benefit of all. There is also recognition that community confidence in the role and effectiveness of teachers will be increased if teachers are seen to be more comparable to other professions in terms of entry qualifications, preparation for practice, and continuing professional learning and development throughout their career.

The influence that the quality of the teacher has on the outcomes of their students and what they are able to achieve has been demonstrated in countless research projects and in popular experience and belief for decades, if not centuries. So the emphasis that current Australian governments are giving to improving the quality of our teaching profession should be no surprise to anyone interested in the progressive development of our society.

Indeed, in the ACT we can be satisfied that we have played a leading role in implementing these measures. Since its establishment by this government in 2011, the ACT Teacher Quality Institute has set up a framework for the teaching profession that is focused on quality improvement rather than mere regulation. I am particularly proud as the minister for all schools and as Minister for Education and Training that we have worked with the teaching profession as a whole across all sectors—Catholic, independent and public.

While we must respect the differences between schools and between sectors, we are ensuring that the boundaries between those areas do not limit possibilities. The Australian professional standards for teachers have been incorporated formally into the TQI regulatory framework for the teaching profession here in the territory. The standards form the basis for the minimum qualifications of entrants to the profession and for the assessment of early entrants as proficient teachers. They underpin the mandatory professional learning and development expected of all teachers in the ACT.

The ACT is one of the few jurisdictions in Australia to have certified teachers against the higher levels of the standards, as highly accomplished and lead teachers. Members ought to be pleased to know that the institute is again this week training school leaders from all sectors to become assessors for its third annual round of standards certification.

The recent report of the federal Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, which I have spoken about previously in this Assembly, was focused on the robust assessment of programs preparing teachers for entry to the profession, on the need for evidence-based teacher education programs and practical experience led by informed mentor teachers, and on a supported transition to the teaching workforce for pre-service teachers. The key theme of the TEMAG review is how we can be assured that graduates from initial teacher education courses are indeed ready to teach in our classrooms.

The ACT is already leading the way in implementation of many of the recommendations of the report through the collaborative work of the TQI, the Education and Training Directorate, other teacher employers and the ACT universities. As I advised the Assembly previously, the TEMAG report itself recognised several initiatives in the ACT which exemplified the innovations recommended by the report. These have included the standardised professional experience assessment for University of Canberra and Australian Catholic University students, leading research and professional practice links between schools and the universities, and professional practice clinics for beginning teachers.

There are many other related initiatives. The TQI teacher mentoring network has been in operation for a number of years. The rigorous standards-based accreditation of initial teacher education programs is currently being conducted by TQI with both of the ACT universities offering initial teacher education courses. I have tasked the TQI with having a lead role in the ACT implementation of the TEMAG report recommendations in relation to initial teacher education, as they involve all schooling sectors and both ACT universities. I have tasked the Education and Training Directorate with ensuring literacy and numeracy testing of new recruits to the public sector teaching service.

So the next question that could be asked—perhaps like the family in the station wagon heading down the coast—is: “Are we there yet?” There remain significant steps to build on the sound foundations we have laid down. First of all we need to move to embed the professional standards more effectively into teaching practice in all sectors of schooling. The most recent national survey conducted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has indicated that, while principals and school leaders have a good grasp of the standards and of their significance for practice, nearly half of all teachers surveyed report that they do not use the standards in practice and more than a third of those surveyed do not believe the standards will have an impact on student outcomes.

I am confident that these figures would be different for the ACT, as all teachers are required to use the standards in recording and reflecting on their professional learning

for professional registration purposes. However, it is clear that more needs to be done to link the aspirations of the standards to the actual practice of teachers in the classroom, which, as I have said on another occasion, is where the rubber hits the road in terms of student outcomes.

The TQI will be strengthening its quality assurance of teacher professional learning to support genuine engagement with the standards across all sectors. The institute will continue its work with Catholic, independent and public schools supporting early career teachers who are progressing to full registration. Further awareness training about the standards and their links to professional practice is also currently being offered by TQI to teachers from all sectors.

In the public sector, the Education and Training Directorate is negotiating to align career structures with the standards and to link salary increment rewards with certification against the standards. In concert with the recommendations of the TEMAG report, we need also to strengthen the understanding of teachers about evidence-based assessment of their own teaching practice and its impact on students. Again the ACT will lead the way with this. The TQI will continue its efforts to foster cross-sectoral collaboration and sharing of best practice.

The TQI will be extending its support for teachers across all sectors, with further professional development in standards-based assessment of evidence of teacher practice. For public sector teachers, initiatives are being developed in the Education and Training Directorate to recognise the importance of high quality, ongoing professional learning in every public school. We need to continue to strengthen the rigour demonstrated in the preparation of pre-service teachers in our universities.

The TQI will continue its collaboration with the universities to support more effective practical experience components of teacher preparation and to provide a platform for the transfer of teaching evidence from the pre-service stage to the early employment stage of their careers through online digital portfolios.

The directorate will build on its practices, ensuring graduate teacher support in the first three years of professional practice, and provide strong school leadership to raise expectations of quality teaching and student outcomes. Through the coordination work of TQI there will be common expectations across all ACT schools for high quality pre-service teacher professional experience and high quality in-service professional learning.

Let me conclude by noting the very considerable progress that we have made as a small jurisdiction in this very significant and important matter. Change in any field always presents some challenges to past practices and to established habits. However, the vast majority of members of the teaching profession across all sectors of schooling in the ACT are responding positively to the measures to support them in improving the professional character of their work and the standing of their profession in the community.

It is hard to see a time when we could be complacent about teacher quality. I am confident that all ACT teachers will find the challenge to engage with standards and

continuous learning and growth a rewarding one, both as individuals and as members of a respected profession. I say to all ACT teachers, whether they are in government schools, independent or Catholic schools, that I appreciate their efforts and the work they do, as do all the Canberra families who have students across our schools. I present the following paper:

Teaching Quality in the ACT—Ministerial statement, 5 May 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.31): I thank the minister for raising this matter today because I know just how important having a quality teacher can be. The issue of teacher quality has taken on more and more importance in recent years, not because I believe there is a crisis in teacher quality in the ACT; rather, it is because the evidence continues to show very strongly the positive impact a highly capable, quality professional teacher has on student outcomes. This, no doubt, is not a surprise to many of us. I am sure none of us believed that the teacher in front of the classroom was a benign force. However, what has struck me, particularly since my own children started primary school, is the level of impact a high quality teacher has on their students.

The research has shown that a teacher is the largest in-school factor that contributes to a student's outcomes. It has been shown that having a good teacher, as opposed to an average one, for five consecutive years is enough to close the performance gap between students of low SES and their more advantaged peers. Similarly, it is perhaps more important to note that while high quality teachers improve student results, the reverse is also true. Poor quality teaching has a net negative impact in student achievement. We as leaders in our community must ensure that in front of every class across the ACT is a capable, well qualified and supported teacher. To achieve this we cannot simply rely on chance. A good teacher is not something that simply emerges from the ether.

For too long I think that as a society we have just assumed good teaching simply happens. However, we must aim to ensure that we have good teachers by design. We must ensure that we have in place the systems and policies that support prospective teachers through their initial education and then again mentor and guide them through the first phases of their career. Dr Ben Jensen, previously of the Grattan Institute, now CEO of Learning First, noted that there are four key strategies needed to lift the quality of the teaching profession. These are: improving the quality of those seeking to enter the teaching profession; lifting the quality of the education and training received through initial education courses; continuing to develop the professional skills of teachers once employed in schools; and promoting, recognising and retaining effective teachers while seeking to remove ineffective teachers.

I am pleased, therefore, to hear from the minister about the leadership shown by the ACT towards the systemic improvement of teachers. In particular, I would like to congratulate the government for the establishment of the Teacher Quality Institute in 2011. As Minister Burch noted, since its establishment the TQI has worked very hard

across all sectors—public, Catholic and independent—to promote the role and expectations of teachers as a profession.

The TQI has not only worked as regulator of the teaching profession but also worked hard to promote the understanding and acceptance of the Australian professional standards for teachers. I was very pleased to hear from the minister that these standards had been formally incorporated into TQI regulations. Again, as the minister illustrated, these standards provide quite clear guidance on the types of knowledge that a teacher should have at every stage of their career.

They provide four clear teaching stages: graduate, for those who have just graduated from their teaching qualification; proficient, for those who meet the requirements of full registration, demonstrating achievement of the seven standards at this level. Highly accomplished are those teachers who are recognised as highly effective, skilled classroom practitioners and who routinely work independently and collaboratively to improve their own practice and the practice of colleagues. They are knowledgeable and active members of the school. And, finally, there are leaders, who are recognised and respected by colleagues, parents, carers and community members as exemplary teachers. They have demonstrated consistent and innovative teaching practice over time. They are skilled in mentoring teachers and pre-service teachers, using activities that develop knowledge, practice and professional engagement in others. They promote creative, innovative thinking among colleagues.

These standards are very useful in providing guidance to teachers about their practice and what they should be demonstrating. I am pleased to hear from the minister that the ACT government, through the TQI, takes them seriously. I was also pleased to hear the many examples from the minister about how the ACT was leading the way nationally to improve teacher quality. The fact that specific practices from the ACT were highlighted by the Australian government Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group as being great examples of systemic approaches speaks highly of the ACT's leadership in this area.

I would also like once again to highlight some of the practices of the Education and Training Directorate, which, as the largest employer of teachers in the ACT, is showing great leadership. The directorate has undertaken clear work, as the minister has also noted, in aligning the professional standards with career progression. It is very important that we reward those who seek higher levels of certification, and I understand that the directorate is negotiating to ensure that teachers who do receive certification against the highly accomplished and lead teacher standards will get an increment.

I would also like to congratulate Minister Burch for her leadership in ensuring that those seeking to enter the public system as teachers meet the highest personal standards for literacy and numeracy. From this year all new teachers recruited to the public education system will have to undergo a test to demonstrate that they sit within the top 30 per cent of Australians in literacy and numeracy. It is important to understand that as part of the national standards for teacher education it is expected that universities only take those who have demonstrated that they meet this level of literacy and numeracy or that universities guarantee that their students will, on graduation, have reached this level.

What is less clear is how universities and employers are actually ensuring that this is the case. The decision by Minister Burch to institute a test is a clear demonstration that the ACT government is serious about only recruiting the best teachers and, to go back to an earlier point, it is clear the ACT government is committed to making sure that in front of every class and every student, at least in the public system, is a capable, well-qualified and supported teacher.

To close, I do not believe that the teaching profession is in a crisis of confidence or quality. I believe that the bulk of ACT teachers across all sectors do a fantastic job. However, we cannot simply rest on our laurels and hope that this continues. We must ensure that practices and systems align to deliver the best students to where they will do the most good in front of our children in classrooms.

It is clear from the minister's statement that the ACT government is committed to teacher quality. Indeed, the government has shown leadership nationally in this area. It is also clear that the ACT government is in this for the long haul, dedicated to a permanent change in practice, culture and systems for the betterment of all ACT students. I congratulate the government for their efforts.

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

***Getting home safely* report—implementation update** **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) (10.38), by leave: I rise to present the fourth update on the progress of the recommendations of the *Getting home safely* report. As members are aware, the report is the outcome of the inquiry commissioned by the government in 2012 into compliance with work health and safety requirements by the ACT's construction industry. The report made 28 recommendations. The government accepted all of the recommendations and committed to presenting progress reports on their implementation to the Assembly.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the support of all members of the Assembly in recognising the importance of work safety in workplaces in the territory. I would also like to acknowledge the support of industry groups, construction companies and workers and employee associations alike for their support and their endeavours to raise safety standards in the construction industry and to change the culture of the industry from one which accepted risk as a day-to-day way of working to one now accepting safety as a primary consideration.

I am pleased to announce, for a fourth successive time since the commissioning of the report, that there have been no fatalities in the ACT construction industry. Whilst this result is to be applauded, as I have constantly said, we must not be complacent. We need to continue to deliver the message that everyone in the construction industry has a responsibility to ensure their own safety and the safety of those around them. We need to continue to encourage and empower workers and employers to stand up and take responsibility for their rights and their safety, and for the safety of those around them.

Whilst there have been no fatalities, and whilst there has been a marked change in approach, the incidence rate for serious injury in the ACT construction sector remains too high. We must continue to pursue safety as a priority.

As I have said, without the commitment and effort of all parties, including government, industry and employee bodies, principal contractors, site supervisors and workers, it is impossible to change the culture of the industry and to reduce the incidence of serious injury.

The *Getting home safely* report recognises that workers' capacity to identify hazards and risks is key to helping minimise risk, and formal construction qualifications and trade skills, on-the-job training and the continued enhancement of these skills are particularly important.

I would like to reiterate the ACT government's commitment to the recommendations of the report to ensure a healthy and safe workplace culture and improved health and safety outcomes for workers in the territory.

As we are all aware, improvement in safety will come not only from compliance activities but from engagement with and support to the industry.

The government strongly believes one of the best ways to improve workplace safety is through active engagement of workers. Safety is the result of collaboration and communication, and I am pleased to see this happening throughout the industry. I believe the industry is demonstrating genuine engagement and increasing cooperation to improve safety outcomes. Engagement and cooperation must continue to develop to achieve a culture of workplace safety.

Since my last update on the progress of the recommendations of the report, in September last year, I can advise the Assembly that over the course of the year WorkSafe ACT has increased the number of work safety inspectors by 12, to 32. A further 11 offences subject to infringement notices commenced on July 2013, and work continues on developing additional offences suitable for infringement notices. The Construction Services Branch of the former ACT Planning and Land Authority and WorkSafe ACT are now structurally aligned in Access Canberra and are better able to collaborate on targeting specific concerns on work sites.

The Work Safety Commissioner has continued to organise and deliver construction industry focused workshops and courses, emphasising education and effective task induction. The Construction Services Branch have participated in many of the workshops, with the ongoing training program allowing for flexibility so that the campaign can respond to topical issues as they arise. The government has provided input to the review of the construction industry card, the white card. The review has been completed and the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council are currently redeveloping the course.

The ACT Industrial Court has been established and has a number of work health and safety matters before it. The court commenced on 8 November 2013. On 28 November that year, Chief Magistrate Lorraine Walker was appointed for four

years as the industrial court magistrate. The court has the jurisdiction to deal with industrial or work safety matters.

I would like to recognise the achievements of groups such as the Work Safety Council and Construction Safety Advisory Committee in implementing improvements throughout the construction industry.

The ACT government continues with the process of active certification and the comparative assessment process for government-funded construction projects. Companies contracting to government are well aware of their safety performance, and that it is being monitored, and any failures to meet safety requirements will have consequences when tendering for future work. The significance of this initiative should not be understated. It not only ensures that companies have excellent safety systems but also has a positive flow-on effect for non-government jobs. This initiative continues to encourage companies to distinguish themselves from their competitors by virtue of the quality of their safety systems and outcomes.

The government are well aware of the importance of the construction industry to the ACT economy, but our support is predicated on ensuring the safety of all construction workers. The introduction of the new infringement notice offences demonstrates the government's commitment to improving work health and safety outcomes for workers in the territory.

I would like at this stage to point to the interventions by this government, in particular by the ACT Work Safety Commissioner and the asbestos task force, to ensure the safety of construction workers who may be exposed to asbestos while at work. Over the last year, the ACT Work Safety Commissioner has taken responsibility for the asbestos awareness course and the licensing of registered training organisations to deliver the course. To date, more than 17,000 workers have undertaken the asbestos awareness course, which is a tremendous result. Recent changes also mean that the Work Safety Commissioner has responsibility for the licensing of asbestos assessors, meaning we now have a coordinated approach to dealing with asbestos issues.

We continue our work with Safe Work Australia to develop guidance for transient and new workers in the construction industry. This work is aimed at assisting employers to identify barriers for communicating work health and safety messages to transient and new workers.

I am pleased to reiterate that the government remains committed to eliminating health and safety risk from ACT workplaces and to leading initiatives and improvements for the health and safety of all ACT workers.

As the Assembly will be aware, the recommendations of *Getting home safely* commit the government to a review of our progress in achieving a reduction in serious injury rates in 2016. The government will provide the Assembly with a report on the outcome of this review.

As I indicated at the beginning, work safety is important in every workplace, in every industry in the territory. We must not lose sight of the fact that other industries have

high injury rates and we must do what we can to reduce those numbers in those workplaces. Given this, my future reports to the Assembly will focus on work safety issues and performance for all territory industries. I intend to provide the Assembly with annual updates on these very important issues.

I present the following paper:

Getting Home Safely: Inquiry into Compliance with Work Health and Safety Requirements in the ACT's Construction Industry—Implementation update—Ministerial statement, 5 May 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (10.47): It is appropriate that the minister for workplace safety brings this statement to the Assembly today. Last week was the national day of mourning; Canberrans got together at the memorial at Lake Burley Griffin to recognise people across Australia who have died from workplace injuries. More than 40 people across Australia have died from workplace injuries this year alone. In the ACT, the memorial recognises Anthony Johnston, Gerard Willey, Wayne Vickery and Ben Catanzariti, four men who should have come home from work.

While the construction industry in the ACT has remained fatality-free since the delivery of the *Getting home safely* report, the serious injury incident rate remains high, so there is still much work to be done.

It is acknowledged that it will be difficult to change the culture of this industry and reduce the incidence of serious injury without the commitment and effort of all parties. Minister Gentleman has pointed out that it is important that all of the parties work together, and there is a commitment from all of the parties—the government, industry, employee bodies, principal contractors, site supervisors and workers more generally.

As a community, we should all continue to seek opportunities to minimise the construction industry health and safety risks. The ACT government is driving improvements in the industry by introducing best practice purchasing arrangements for construction projects that it commissions, including active certification for the review and measurement of a construction contractor's health and safety performance and whole-of-government construction project management guidelines.

Active certification is the process through which the performance of construction contractors who have been commissioned to undertake work on behalf of the territory will be audited and their health and safety performance measured. Where a contractor's health and safety performance is found to be lacking, this will affect the ability of the contractor to work for the territory. This initiative has been widely accepted by the industry and has identified several improvements for those companies

that have been audited. To date, more than 60 audits have been completed. The whole-of-government guidelines set a benchmark for the management of construction projects commissioned by the government. The guidelines ensure that workplace safety is a key consideration when procuring and managing construction work.

The ACT government is committed to improving health and safety outcomes for the territory's construction industry. We will continue to work with the community, employers and unions to identify effective, practical solutions that keep people safe in their workplace and bring people home to their families, where they should be.

Many of us have risen in this house to talk about deaths and injuries of workers not just in the construction industry but across all workplaces. Every employee should be able to come home to their family injury free and alive. I want to mention the CFMEU's campaign which they launched last year, calling on Australians to stand up, speak out and come home. But it is the responsibility of each of us to ensure that our mates, our employees and those in our community make it home safely.

As we all recognise in this place, every Australian worker has the right to come home in one piece at the end of the day. That is why it is important that we continue to make workplace health and safety a priority. That is something this government and Minister Gentleman have assured us of today.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

National Youth Week

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) (10.51), by leave: Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to reflect on the significance of what was a very successful National Youth Week held here in the ACT. National Youth Week provides us with an opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements and contributions that our young people make to the life of Canberra and to Australia more generally. As members are aware, National Youth Week is an annual joint Australian, state and territory initiative that celebrates and recognises the value that young Australians contribute to their communities. The objective of National Youth Week is to showcase young people's talents, contributions and achievements, and to acknowledge the common interests of young people as well as their diverse backgrounds and circumstances. National Youth Week also provides an opportunity for young people to express their ideas and to be heard.

National Youth Week is the single largest celebration of young people in Australia. In the ACT, hundreds of young people aged from 12 to 25 get involved in National Youth Week each year, and the recent 2015 event proved to be no different, with a fantastic celebration of young people in our community. National Youth Week in the ACT was launched on 10 April with a youth expo in Garema Place. The expo saw over 20 youth-related community organisations represented. The purpose of the expo was to provide information on the services available for young people in the Canberra

community as well as some fun giveaways and entertainment. There was popcorn from Belconnen Community Service, green slime from Headspace, free water bottles from ACT Health, wristbands, sports socks and USB sticks from Youth InterACT, and a free sausage sizzle put on by the Youth Coalition.

I had the honour of being involved in the healthy eating cook-off against Diane Joseph from the Education and Training Directorate and Emma Robertson from the Youth Coalition. Cooking in front of a crowd of young people in Garema Place on a Friday night is something I had not thought I would ever see myself doing, but it was great fun and we got a great reception. My Austrian burgers, which were a hit with my mates when we were backpacking around Queensland on a tight budget, unfortunately were outdone by the fine chicken satay dish from Diane on the night. I must say, there were still some greens left over, though.

I also had the pleasure of listening to several young bands performing in the city centre as part of the expo, and I can say that live music is well and truly thriving with the current generation of young talented performers. The expo was just one of more than 15 events throughout the week at various venues across Canberra. One of the most spectacular events was an exhibition of over 10,000 self-portraits and messages from students attending over 50 ACT schools, called *Right Here Right Now*. The self-portraits were stuck onto hundreds of cardboard boxes and arranged into the shape of a double helix to symbolise young people being a part of the DNA of Canberra.

This art project was organised by Alasdair Roy, Commissioner for Children and Young People, and commenced in November 2014 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through this art project the ACT's young people have told us what is important to them and why their contribution should be recognised as important to the Canberra community. The old adage that children and young people should be seen and not heard is one that is rightly being challenged. For too long, younger voices have struggled to get the ear of those in authority. This is not the way that an inclusive community should operate and it is why we want to build a society where everyone is able to participate and realise their goals.

It is one of the main reasons behind a step up for our kids, the ACT government's new strategy for out of home care. We believe family and community play a vital role in the promotion of children and young people's rights through the provision of a positive and caring environment that listens to and supports their needs. This supportive, positive environment was clearly on display during National Youth Week.

Some of the other National Youth Week events included a three-ring circus extravaganza, hosted by Belconnen Community Centre, featuring carnival games, circus performances, workshops, bands and food. In Tuggeranong, young people hurled wet sponges, shot some hoops and grooved to tunes spun by a DJ at the Gugan Gulwan Aboriginal Corporation. This event highlighted the need for us as a community to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overlooked but given every opportunity to have a voice and access to appropriate services and supports.

At the Youth Coalition's Just Sayin' forum, held here in the Assembly, I was joined by Minister Berry, Minister Rattenbury, Mr Wall and Ms Lawder and listened directly to a number of young people talk in front of a packed audience about what is important to them. It was insightful to hear what these articulate young people had to contribute to the topics of gender equality, improving services for young people, making Canberra a healthier place to live and our attitude to and treatment of refugees. These important matters aside, I think the issue of banning homework was the most popular idea, certainly among the young people!

There were many highlights for me during the recent National Youth Week in the ACT, including: a tour of the National Zoo and Aquarium for participants of the St Vincent de Paul young parents program; a youth pop-up in Woden town square featuring drumming, creative kicks and badge making; and a youth urban art exhibition featuring art creations from discarded junk by participants of Tuggeranong Art Centre's messengers program. The exhibition raised environmental awareness by encouraging up-cycling of items that would normally be thrown away. Each of these events represents a way that young people have made their voices heard during National Youth Week, but the challenge for our community is to step up and ensure that this is not just a once a year exercise.

This government values social inclusion, and it is important to include children and young people in the decisions that affect them now and that affect this community into the future. In the ACT we have a range of ways in which young people can have their say on issues that are important to them. For example, the ACT government invites young people to have a voice in decision-making through the Youth Advisory Council. This is just one of many examples of how the ACT government hears the voices of our leaders of tomorrow. The Youth Advisory Council not only provides me with valuable advice related to young people but also supports the development of young people as leaders. The council's 15 members are aged between 12 and 25 years and are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds that represent our broader community, including a gender balance, young people with disabilities and representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally linguistically and diverse backgrounds.

Members of the Youth Advisory Council attended National Youth Week events to talk and listen to what young people had to say about the future of our city. One of the current key focus areas for the council is gender diversity. At the expo the Youth Advisory Council members surveyed young people on this issue, and I am looking forward to seeing the results of that.

Canberra has a dynamic population of young people, hailing from more than 170 culturally diverse communities and boasting a vast spectrum of skills and abilities. We have sporting stars, cooks, musicians, budding academics, tradies, teachers and artists, among others, all set to make their mark on the capital. Being a young person in Canberra does have its challenges, but there are many opportunities and resources available to assist young people to fully participate and make our city a more vibrant and diverse community.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Emma Robertson and her hardworking team at the Youth Coalition of the ACT for their coordination of National Youth Week in the territory, as well as the young people themselves who ran and contributed to all the events across the ACT. The 2015 National Youth Week in the ACT was a great success and I look forward to next year's celebration of the contributions, successes and vitality of young people here in this great city of Canberra.

I present the following paper:

National Youth Week—Ministerial statement, 5 May 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.01): National Youth Week is a fantastic celebration of young people in our community. Since its official start on 10 April there has been a range of events covering entertainment, discussion of important issues, healthy eating and much more, which we have heard about from the minister. Who could not be impressed by events including the National Youth Week expo in Garema Place and the *Right Here Right Now* installation at the Fitters Workshop in Kingston, where 10,000 Canberra students took part with their self-portraits saying why adults should listen to them; the National Youth Week conference, which brought young people from across Australia to talk about today's issues, whether they were national or international; the healthy cooking demonstration at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre; and the Just Sayin' forum for young people to talk directly to the ACT government, where ACT government ministers Yvette Berry, Shane Rattenbury and Mick Gentleman met and talked to young people about what is important to them?

Each of those events represents the way young people have been able to make their voices heard during National Youth Week in Canberra. Our challenge as a society, as the minister has said, is to step up to ensure that this is not just one of those once a year exercises. I commend the ACT government for their commitment to this initiative.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed from 26 March 2015, on motion by **Mr Corbell**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.03): The opposition will support the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This omnibus bill amends nine acts administered by JACS. In the main, the amendments are minor and non-controversial and do not amount to significant policy changes. I will comment briefly on each of the amendments.

There is a range of amendments to the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 1995. They are consequential to amendments being made to commonwealth law, with commencement provisions designed to coincide with the commencement of the commonwealth amendments. They relate to the streamlining of classification processes through approved online automated classification tools, revocations, conditional cultural exemptions in the commonwealth act and modifications—for example, releasing material in 3D format that previously was only available in 2D. It also empowers the commonwealth Attorney-General to notify law enforcement agencies of potential refused classification material or, in other words, pre-classification material, so that it can be removed before distribution.

The Commercial Arbitration Act 1986 is amended to include the ACAT in the definition of “court”. This is to stop a party to an arbitration agreement starting proceedings in the ACAT for matters in the agreement that are agreed should proceed to arbitration.

The most significant amendments made in this bill are to the Coroners Act 1997. These amendments address problems encountered in the Coroners Court when witnesses refuse to give evidence on the grounds that they might incriminate themselves. There have been several cases in the past few years where this has been a problem. Indeed, towards the end of the last Assembly, Madam Speaker, when she was the shadow attorney-general, was aware of at least two cases in which witnesses refused to give evidence in coronial inquiries on the grounds of self-incrimination. The then shadow attorney-general made some preliminary inquiries about the drafting of legislative amendments, but it was near the end of the term and impractical to do so. I am aware that Madam Speaker has been in touch with one of the families that first raised these issues with her back in 2012. They have considered the amendments proposed in this bill and obtained the view of their legal counsel and they are satisfied that these amendments achieve what was necessary to achieve.

The Canberra Liberals agree and are pleased to see these reforms to the law. In saying so, however, once again I say to the Attorney-General that we want to see significant areas of law change dealt with separately and not in omnibus bills such as this one. Whilst these amendments are not controversial, they are not minor. They have far-reaching implications and should have been brought forward in a dedicated bill.

The amendments to the Court Procedures Act 2004 provide that ACAT security officers can require a person to undergo a search in accordance with written policy made by the ACAT general president. This is a sensible amendment and brings ACAT security standards into line with those standing in the Supreme and Magistrates courts.

A minor amendment to the Electoral Act 1992 allows the Electoral Commissioner to publish gifts and loans returns, electorate expenditure returns and annual returns by 7 September each year instead of the current 1 September. This gives the commissioner a more reasonable time to comply because the deadline for lodgement is now 31 August. Importantly, the amendment ensures the information will be available some six or seven weeks before polling day in election years.

Amendments to the Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991 will require the Public Trustee, when appointed as manager of a person's property, to provide a statement of account to the person or their guardian each year. This provides better transparency and is a good internal control measure. It could be questioned why this has been absent up until now.

Other amendments include a minor correction to the Legal Profession Act 2006, expansion of the Public Trustee's role under the Public Trustee Act 1995 to manage a superannuation fund on behalf of a person with a disability if the person has money or property invested in the fund, and a requirement on utilities under the Utilities Act 2000 to deal with personal information in accordance with the Australian privacy principles, the credit reporting requirements of the commonwealth's Privacy Act 1988 and the utility's registered credit reporting code under the Privacy Act.

I commend the JACS directorate and its staff for their work in bringing these changes through. I am particularly happy to support the amendments to the Coroners Act which have been called for by a number of people who have approached the opposition over the years. As stated previously, we will support this bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.09): I will be supporting this bill today. As with the regular justice legislation amendment bills that have come before it, this bill makes several minor amendments across justice legislation. I will touch on some of the amendments briefly, as they are explained in detail in the explanatory statement and have been described already by Mr Corbell and touched on by Mr Hanson.

I note that the amendments to the ACT classification act are consequential amendments due to changes to the commonwealth classification act. I will not comment on the commonwealth policies themselves except to note that they come out of the Australian Law Reform Commission's report on classification and content regulation.

Several technical changes to the Commercial Arbitration Act, the Coroners Act and the Court Procedures Act will ensure that, respectively: a party to an arbitration agreement will not commence proceedings in the ACAT where there is an agreement to refer the matter to arbitration to resolve the same dispute; witnesses in coronial inquests and inquiries will have privilege against self-incrimination—a change that makes us consistent with other jurisdictions; and court security staff must comply with written policies on search procedures produced by the General President of ACAT. A similar provision already exists for policies produced by the Chief Justice or Chief Magistrate.

A change to the Electoral Act will ensure that annual returns must be made available for public inspection by 7 September, after the end of the financial year to which the return relates. This will allow sufficient time, as recent amendments to the Electoral Act moved the deadline for annual returns to 31 August.

A change to the Guardianship and Management of Property Act will improve transparency by requiring the Public Trustee to provide an annual statement of account to the protected person, or their guardian, where a court or tribunal has appointed the Public Trustee as a financial manager.

A change to the Public Trustee Act will also allow the Supreme Court to authorise the Public Trustee to invest in superannuation in the client's name and manage the funds on their behalf.

These changes, and the remaining minor changes in the bill, appear sensible and have my support. I am happy to vote in support of the legislation today.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.11), in reply: I thank members for their support of this bill today. As with other JACS bills, the bill will improve the effectiveness of the ACT statute book, and the amendments in it are minor and uncontroversial. They will improve the operation of a number of the territory's laws which fall within the Justice and Community Safety portfolio.

I note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the opposition's continued view that amendments such as the one made to the Coroners Act should be put forward in a separate, stand-alone bill. I would simply make the observation that such a bill would be an extremely small bill, very brief in its content. Indeed, it would consist of only one clause. It seems to me entirely unsuitable to adopt such a course of action. These are minor and uncontroversial amendments and they are best progressed through omnibus legislation rather than going through the rigmarole of developing an entirely new bill with only one amending clause.

I went through the specific provisions of the bill when I presented it on 26 March this year. Rather than repeat that, I will simply take the opportunity to comment on a number of elements. The bill contains two sets of amendments which are consequential in nature. These are amendments to the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act and the amendments to the Electoral Act.

The amendments to the classification laws cement a commonwealth move to be more pragmatic and less bureaucratic about classification. The amendments in the bill commence at different times, reflecting the staged commencement of the amendments made to the commonwealth's Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995, with all amendments commencing during this calendar year.

A consequential amendment to the Electoral Act provides the commissioner with an additional week to prepare lodged annual returns for public inspection. This amendment ensures that the Electoral Commissioner has sufficient time to meet the new legislative framework for annual returns while still ensuring that the information is available to constituents before the actual election to which the returns relate.

The bill also contains a number of amendments that relate to the operation of the courts and the provision of legal services. Section 53 of the Commercial Arbitration Act allows a party to stay proceedings in the Supreme Court or the Magistrates Court where there is an agreement between the parties to refer the matter to arbitration. The bill amends this section to prevent a party from commencing procedures in the ACAT if there is an agreement to refer the matter to arbitration for resolution. The

amendment reinforces existing provisions that encourage parties to pursue arbitration rather than litigation in the first instance and closes a loophole which would otherwise allow such procedures to be circumvented.

We have discussed during this debate the changes to the Coroners Act in relation to the privilege against self-incrimination for witnesses at inquests or inquiries, a privilege which is available to witnesses in other court matters under the Evidence Act. This is an important protection that will not only protect the right of witnesses not to incriminate themselves but will improve the integrity of the coronial process.

The amendment to the Court Procedures Act relates to the existing requirement under section 45 that court security officers must comply with any written policy of the Chief Justice or Chief Magistrate when conducting a search of a person in the Supreme Court and the Magistrates Court. This bill extends that requirement to any policy written by the General President of the ACAT. This will improve the protection of both staff and visitors to the tribunal.

The bill also contains two sets of amendments relating to the work of the Public Trustee. The first amends the Guardianship and Management of Property Act to require the Public Trustee to provide annual statements of account for a protected person. The amendment applies where the Civil and Administrative Tribunal has appointed the Public Trustee to act as a manager on behalf of that protected person. This new requirement will increase transparency as well as militate against a potential misuse of trust fund moneys.

The second relates to the work of the Public Trustee in relation to the Public Trustee Act 1985. Section 25A details what the Public Trustee may do with funds or property held on trust for a person with a disability. At the moment this section is not sufficiently wide to allow the Supreme Court to authorise the Public Trustee to invest in superannuation in the client's name or to administer and protect those funds on the client's behalf. This removes an opportunity from clients of the Public Trustee. Accordingly, the bill amends section 25A to allow the court to direct the Public Trustee to manage a person's superannuation fund.

To improve clarity in relation to the provision of legal services, the bill relocates a section in the Legal Profession Act 2006 which deals with cost disclosure obligations to the division in the act dealing with those obligations.

Finally, the bill amends the Utilities Act to clarify that utility providers must comply with credit reporting protections under the Privacy Act and the Credit Code, as well as meeting their obligations under the Australian privacy principles. These amendments include a review mechanism that allows complaints to be made to the ACAT under these provisions. This amendment will improve transparency and best practice in complaints handling about utilities, as well as improving the protection of personal information acquired by utility providers.

In summary, this bill involves the continuous improvement of the territory's legislative framework by ensuring transparency and integrity of process, enhancing protections and maintaining the integrity of the statute book. I thank members for their support of the bill and commend it to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed from 26 March 2015, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.18): The opposition will support the Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill is the eighth omnibus bill in the planning, building and environment space and contains minor amendments to the following regulations and legislation: the Building Act 2004 and Building (General) Regulation 2008; the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act 2004 and Construction Occupations (Licensing) Regulations 2004; the Environment Protection Act 1997; the Planning and Development Regulation 2008; the Utilities Act 2000; and, finally, the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011.

Many of the amendments in this bill are designed to ensure the safe removal of asbestos. Since January this year asbestos assessor and removalist licensing has been regulated under the Work Health and Safety Act and the Dangerous Substances Act. Under provisions in those acts, asbestos can be removed only by a licensed asbestos removalist. A licensed asbestos removalist is not necessarily a licensed builder, and under the current construction occupation licensing laws a builder's licence does not allow the handling of asbestos.

This means there is a gap in the legislation when it comes to the structural work on a building—for example, the demolition of a Mr Fluffy house. In order for the demolition to be carried out or supervised by a licensed builder, the restriction on builders dealing with asbestos will be removed under the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act. It should be noted that the restriction is only lifted for structural work that actually requires a builder to supervise it.

This bill also contains minor amendments that remove power over asbestos matters from the Building Act to reflect the fact they are now covered by the Dangerous Substances Act and the Safety Act. This bill contains minor amendments to the Environment Protection Act to bring it in line with changes made to the territory plan a couple of years ago relating to the way plantation forestry areas are identified. Amendments are also made to wording related to forests. An amendment to the Planning and Development Regulation corrects an error in the regulation and changes the statutory officer from the director-general to the technical regulator. The final amendments in this bill are largely minor editorial ones.

In conclusion, the opposition is pleased to support this bill, which makes sensible changes to the planning, building and environment legislation, especially in dealing with asbestos.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.21): This bill proposes minor policy and editorial amendments to a range of legislation, including: the Building Act 2004 and Building (General) Regulation 2008; the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act 2004 and Construction Occupations (Licensing) Regulations 2004; the Planning and Development Regulation 2008; the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011; the Environment Protection Act 1997; and the Utilities Act 2000. An important element of this bill is that it clarifies that a licensed asbestos removalist must be a licensed builder under the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act and regulations, otherwise known as COLA. This means that a builder must hold an asbestos removal licence under work health and safety regulations to carry out building work that involves asbestos or asbestos removal. This is subsequent to the Dangerous Substances (Asbestos Safety Reform) Legislation Amendment Act 2014 and the Work Health and Safety (Asbestos) Amendment Regulation 2014, which harmonised the territory's asbestos management framework with those of other jurisdictions.

The bill amends provisions relating to the exemption of building work from the operation of the Building Act or parts of the act. The bill simplifies provisions so that exemption refers to both building work and a building. The bill also includes other minor technical amendments, including in relation to how plantation forestry areas are referenced and identified in the territory plan and correcting the name of a statutory office under the Utilities Act.

This is a range of minor and technical amendments which simply ensure that identified problems are resolved, and the Greens will support the bill before us today.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (11.23): I am pleased to support the Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The minister has previously talked about the construction and building law amendments made by the bill. I would like to discuss the other amendments made in this bill. These include editorial amendments of the Environment Protection Act and the Planning and Development Act to update references to the territory plan, as well as minor corrections to schedule 3 of the Planning and Development Regulation, the Utilities Act and the Work Health and Safety Regulation.

In 2012 a territory plan variation reconfigured how plantation forestry areas are identified in the territory plan. Unfortunately, at the time two pieces of legislation that refer to plantation forestry areas were not updated to reflect the changes. Clauses 41 and 42 of the bill amend the Environment Protection Act, schedule 1 and dictionary, and clauses 43 to 45 amend the Planning and Development Regulations, section 1.92 and schedule 3, to ensure that references in those sections to plantation forestry areas are consistent with the territory plan.

A further amendment is being made to the Planning and Development Regulation by clause 46 of the bill. In 2011 schedule 3, part 3.4, of the regulation was amended to

extend an exemption to third-party appeals to the Kingston foreshore area. A map of the Kingston foreshore was included in part 3.4. However, the heading of the part was not amended to reflect this. The bill amends the heading.

An amendment is also being made to the Utilities Act by clause 47 of the bill to correct a reference to the statutory office of director-general in section 45. The Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act commenced on 1 March 2015, and the Utilities Act 2000 was consequentially amended. The amended Utilities Act, which also started on 1 March, unfortunately makes an incorrect reference in section 45(2)(a)(ii) to the director-general under part 5 of the Utilities Act. The bill amends the section to include the correct statutory office, which is the technical regulator.

Clauses 26 and 27 update and clarify a reference to directors-general in section 22 of the Building Regulation. Clause 26 substitutes the words “relevant directors-general”, and clause 27 inserts a new definition of “relevant directors-general”. The amendments simplify the legislation and reflect current drafting practices. Clause 48 inserts a new note in section 458 of the Work Health and Safety Regulation. Section 458 requires a person who conducts a business or undertaking that involves the removal of asbestos to ensure the asbestos removal work is carried out by a licensed asbestos removalist. The new note is consequential to the reforms made by the bill to the Building Act to permit licensed builders to be involved in handling asbestos. The note points out that for asbestos removal work that involves critical building work, a licensed asbestos removalist must also be, or be supervised by, a licensed builder.

The bill proposes a number of minor policy, technical and editorial amendments to acts and regulations, as an omnibus bill should. The amendments are non-controversial and make good practical sense. The bill demonstrates this government’s commitment to effective and responsible use of the omnibus bill process. I note that in the past members of the community have expressed appreciation of being able to access one bill to monitor the minor changes that are happening to legislation in the planning, building and environment sphere. The bill also helps this Assembly to monitor the effective operation of territory laws. A single bill ensures that changes to those laws are easily accessible to all Canberrans. I commend the bill.

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) (11.27), in reply: I am pleased to support the Planning, Building and Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This is the eighth bill to be created under the government’s omnibus planning, building and environment legislation amendment bill process. The process manages all minor policy, technical or editorial amendments for legislation administered by the Environment and Planning Directorate. This omnibus bill process provides an efficient avenue for the consolidation of minor amendments into a single bill, and the single bill process also helps the wider community to access and understand changes being made in the planning system.

The bill makes minor policy, technical and editorial amendments to the Building Act 2004 and the Building (General) Regulation 2008; the Construction Occupations

(Licensing) Act 2004 and the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Regulation 2004; the Environment Protection Act 1997; the Planning and Development Regulation 2008; the Utilities Act 2000; and the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011. The principal amendments made by this bill will strengthen building and construction laws and ensure practical and efficient asbestos safety management in the territory. Other more minor and consequential amendments made by the bill have been discussed by Ms Fitzharris.

As members of the Assembly are well aware, asbestos is the most insidious legacy of our past building practices. As a government we must be proactive in our approach to the health and wellbeing of our entire community, particularly those who work within it. The government remains committed to continuing to have nation-leading asbestos management frameworks and practices. At this point I will give a bit of history around the amendments made by the bill in relation to asbestos management.

In 2014 the territory's asbestos management framework was harmonised with those of other model jurisdictions, in accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement for Regulatory and Operational Reform in Occupational Health and Safety. Asbestos licensing provisions were removed from the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act 2004 by the Dangerous Substances (Asbestos Safety Reform) Legislation Amendment Act 2014, effective January 2015. This means asbestos assessor and removalist licensing is now regulated in the territory by the Work Health and Safety Act and the Dangerous Substances Act 2004. This means asbestos can only be removed by a licensed asbestos removalist. The Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act does not apply in this situation.

This approach was working well in relation to asbestos found in discrete forms—for example, a piece of asbestos cement sheeting. Specialist building knowledge is not required to remove asbestos in this circumstance. However, recent investigations in relation to Mr Fluffy houses have revealed that asbestos can be in the infrastructure of a building. In this case, removal of the asbestos also requires the removal of infrastructure that could be critical to the structural integrity of the building. The discovery meant there was a regulatory gap with safety implications not just for the public but also for workers. The problem was that an asbestos removalist's licence does not require a licensee to have the specialist knowledge required to safely remove critical infrastructure of a building. A builder's licence requires this specialist knowledge, but under the construction occupation licensing laws a builder's licence did not allow the handling of asbestos.

I will give an example: a Mr Fluffy house is to be demolished. A builder cannot do the work or supervise doing the work because the builder's licence does not permit the builder to handle asbestos; only an asbestos removalist can do the asbestos removal. But the removalist does not have the specialist knowledge, nor does his licence qualify him, to safely demolish a building. Clause 34 of the bill closes this regulatory gap by removing the restriction imposed by section 8 of the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act on builders dealing with asbestos. The bill ensures that building work that warrants a licensed builder's expertise or supervision and involves asbestos removal is within the scope of licensable work of a builder.

If asbestos removal involves critical building work, a licensed asbestos removalist can do the work but must also be, or be supervised by, a licensed builder. Work that does not affect the structure of a building will only require a licensed asbestos removalist and will generally be exempted from construction and building laws, particularly by the schedules of exempt building work under schedule 1 of the Building (General) Regulation 2008.

I now turn to the other amendments made by the bill that are asbestos related. A large proportion of the bill deals with what I think could be called a tidy up of the various building and construction laws to remove obsolete references to asbestos. As I said earlier, asbestos-related laws were moved to the work, health and safety and dangerous substances laws last year. These laws now deal with asbestos codes, and references to asbestos in the Building Act are obsolete. Part 2 of the bill—clauses 7, 14 to 17, 20 and 21—removes references to asbestos from the Building Act. Part 3—clauses 23, 25, and 28 to 33—removes references to asbestos from the building regulation. Part 5 of the bill—clauses 27 to 40—removes references to asbestos in the Constructions Occupations (Licensing) Regulation, and part 4 removes references to asbestos in the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act 2004.

In making the amendments to the building legislation I have just discussed, the opportunity has also been taken in this bill to consolidate and clarify Building Act exemption provisions, including where they relate to asbestos. The present structure of the Building Act in this regard was rather convoluted, so the intention of the proposed amendments is to clarify and simplify the exemption provisions. The bill amends provisions related to the exemption of building work from the operation of the Building Act or parts of the act. Existing sections 15, 65 and 83 of the act relate to the exemption of building work from the relevant parts of the act. This is in contrast to the single exemption provision for “a building” in section 152 of the act that applies to all of the act or parts of the act. These differing approaches to exemptions are unnecessary and can lead to confusion. The concept of building work is work related to a building under section 6 of the act and, as such, the concepts are closely interwoven and the exemption structure should be the same for both.

Clauses 18 and 19 of the bill amend section 152 of the act, so this exemption provision refers to both building work and a building. Consistent with the approach of the exemptions in existing section 152, the new provision makes it clear that exemptions for building work can apply to the act as a whole or any specified element of the act. With the amendment of section 152, sections 15, 65 and 83 are no longer required and clauses 6, 10 and 12 omit these sections from the Building Act. Various other clauses of the bill make consequential amendments to these substantive amendments—for example, clauses 8, 9, 13 and 18.

Also as part of clarifying the term “building work” in the Building Act, clause 5 of the bill inserts a new note in section 6 of the Building Act as a reminder that although section 6 defines the term “building work” for the act, part 6 of the act uses this concept differently. In part 6 the term “building work” excludes demolition of a whole building. There is no substantive change made by this amendment. As I have said, it is to ensure that the reader is alerted that part 6 and section 6 have different definitions of “building work”.

It is apparent that this bill has most definitely fulfilled its purpose as an omnibus bill. The amendments are minor but altogether play an important part in making building and construction legislation up to date, more easily understood and accurate. In particular, this bill plays an important role in the continuing development of easily accessible and understood asbestos-related laws in the territory. Asbestos is a health issue of concern to everyone, and improving asbestos-related legislation can only be a huge benefit to the community.

I thank members for their contribution to this debate—Mr Coe’s view on sensible changes to legislation, Ms Fitzharris’s discussion on minor corrections and amendments to the territory plan and other legislation, and Mr Rattenbury’s support for the minor and technical changes. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Children and Young People Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed from 26 March 2015, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.37): I rise to speak briefly to the Children and Young People Amendment Bill 2015. May I say at the outset that the Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill.

The bill seeks to amend the Children and Young People Act 2008 in relation to the ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee. The bill and the explanatory statement describe the proposed amendments as administrative in nature and designed to enable the committee to function more efficiently. In particular, the bill sets out requirements for the appointment of committee members and the deputy chair and alters the quorum at meetings.

This committee plays an important role in examining information about the deaths of children and young people under the age of 18 years in the ACT. The functions of the committee include identifying emerging patterns and trends and undertaking research aimed at preventing and reducing the number of child deaths. The committee is able to recommend changes to legislation, policies, practices and services that will help prevent the deaths of children and young people in the ACT.

I take this opportunity to note that my colleague Mrs Dunne has previously expressed concerns about the ACT government trying to tie everything up in a single piece of legislation which is almost 1,000 pages long. She highlighted at that time that the length of the legislation could be problematic, which is evidenced by the number of amendments that have already been made to the act since it was passed in 2008.

Mrs Dunne also commented at that time, in 2011, on the prescriptive nature of the committee membership provision in the original bill. It is good to see that, through this bill being debated today, the ACT government is making the committee membership provision less prescriptive than the current provision in the act. Hopefully, this will enable the committee to function more efficiently and effectively. Mrs Dunne said in 2011:

The Canberra Liberals will support this amendment, which replaces a very prescriptive committee membership which was in the original bill.

She went on to talk about some other changes that she thought could have been made at that time but were not made.

Once again, I say that it is good to see that changes are being made that will enable the committee to operate more effectively. We will be supporting this bill today in that it should enable the committee to function in a more efficient manner.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.40): My former colleague Meredith Hunter was key in successfully creating the laws which established the Children and Young People Death Review Committee for the ACT, which is the matter before us today. I know Ms Hunter and the ACT Greens worked hard to achieve this in the Assembly, and I would like to acknowledge that it is as a result of her persistence and dedication to this important issue that we are here debating this bill today.

At the time, in March 2011, the ACT was one of only two Australian jurisdictions without such a service. The legislation was designed to look at trends and systemic causes which contribute to the deaths of children and young people in the territory and aimed to identify strengths and weaknesses in systemic responses to child deaths and actions that can be taken to avoid similar deaths.

The review committee is different from a coroner in that it looks at how we can respond to prevent deaths of children and young people in the future, not just at what has been the cause of death. The committee provides the ACT with a comprehensive review system that will identify strengths and weaknesses in system and community responses for the benefit of future prevention and action.

As Ms Hunter said at the time, child death review teams do not aim to determine the culpability of alleged offenders or comment on the individual performance of people, nor do they investigate the causes of child deaths; that role is left to the police and the coroner. It is therefore vital that the make-up of the committee be reflective of the skills needed to work through these very difficult, confronting and complex cases. The exhaustive list provided in this amendment bill remains true to the original intent of the bill that saw its creation, in that the skills required to undertake this work are maintained and, in fact, broadened.

The only comment I would make on this section relates to the ongoing need to ensure that specific and identified expertise and targeted membership be considered a high priority. As an example, it is welcome that a designated police officer is still kept as a

key and core requirement of the committee. I am hopeful that the committee membership, functions and findings will continue to be monitored and evaluated over time to ensure that we are getting the balance right.

The remainder of the amendments are minor in nature and reflect, I gather, the need to have some increased flexibility for the committee in their meetings, noting that the frequency of meetings may be irregular and the current relevant sections may be creating unnecessary administrative burdens for its functions. Further, the amendments reflect that the professionals required to form the committee may have competing demands, and these amendments will provide for a more flexible, yet still robust, set of procedures.

In closing, while the ACT Greens will continue to monitor the committee and its important functions, I will be supporting the bill before us today.

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) (11.43), in reply: The ACT Children and Young People Amendment Bill 2015 makes amendments to chapter 19A of the Children and Young People Act 2008 and has been designed to improve the administrative efficiency of the Children and Young People Death Review Committee. I tabled the bill in the Assembly on 26 March this year.

I take this opportunity to remind the Assembly of the important functions of this committee, those being establishing a register of deaths of children and young people, identifying patterns and trends in relation to the deaths of children and young people, and determining research that would be valuable in preventing further child deaths.

This research has allowed the committee to identify that since July 2004 more than 14 children have died in the ACT due to unsafe sleeping situations. In response to this, the committee has worked very hard towards raising awareness of the issue of unsafe sleeping and also in the education of parents and caregivers in this important area. The committee work in this area has included releasing a fact sheet, several media releases and a submission to the Australian College of Midwives. The committee has also been able to use what it has learnt to contribute to recent research on self-harm and suicidal behaviour in children and young people—research carried out by the National Children's Commissioner and ACT Health's Academic Unit of Psychiatry and Addictive Medicine.

Each year, the annual report of the ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee provides the community with information on the deaths of children and young people that occur in the ACT, as well as the deaths of ACT children and young people that occur outside the ACT. The committee will release its fourth annual report later this year.

The amendments to legislation proposed in this bill relate to administrative matters and will have little direct impact on the central work of the committee. However, this bill will enable a more efficient operation of the Children and Young People Death Review Committee by reducing the time and resources spent on administrative

functions. These amendments will also increase flexibility in making committee appointments and holding meetings, allowing the committee to focus on its most important goal—working towards preventing future child deaths in the ACT.

There are four amendments included in this bill. The first allows for increased flexibility for the minister when appointing new members. This amendment arose from concerns that the qualifications, experience and expertise prescribed for committee appointments may unnecessarily limit the pool from which to draw future members when a vacancy occurs. It is fundamental to the committee's strength and depth that its members represent a range of backgrounds and disciplines and include people who hold significant positions within the community and relevant organisations. The bill will increase the government's capacity to locate and appoint members who are able to contribute significantly to the committee's work.

Secondly, the bill will allow the committee to meet in the absence of the chair by allowing for the appointment of a deputy chair. Thirdly, it will allow for business to be carried out with a quorum of at least half the members present rather than the current two-thirds. These amendments will limit the number of meetings that need to be cancelled at short notice.

The final amendment is purely administrative and removes the requirement to provide at least 14 days written notice of meetings. This requirement has been found to be unnecessarily prescriptive in that it reduces flexibility if a meeting needs to be rescheduled at short notice.

The committee is given a calendar of meeting dates at the beginning of each year and electronic calendar invites are sent and responded to at that time. Members are also reminded of the next meeting date at the conclusion of each meeting. The dates are then included in the minutes and in the agenda for the next meeting when circulated. Further written notification has proven to be an unnecessary additional obligation.

I can also inform the Assembly that these amendments have been proposed by members of the Children and Young People Death Review Committee to improve the functionality of the committee.

We have an obligation to support the ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee in carrying out its principal functions. The ACT community has an expectation that the committee will deliver key information around the deaths of children in the ACT and will seek to learn from these deaths to help stop similar deaths happening in the future.

Already, in the comparatively short life of the committee, it has used its learnings to contribute to educating the ACT community about safe sleeping practices for babies and children and has been able to make submissions and provide data to important ACT and national research projects.

Reducing the administrative burden on the committee and increasing flexibility around appointments and meetings will help the committee to focus its efforts on continuing its most important work.

I thank members for their support for this bill. I thank Ms Lawder for her support and for outlining the important role of the committee. I thank Mr Rattenbury for his support and I note the history that he described. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.50 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Hospitals—performance

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, last week the National Health Performance Authority produced its latest report, which shows that Canberra has the two most inefficient hospitals in Australia. In a comparison of 48 major metropolitan hospitals, the Canberra Hospital was the most inefficient in Australia. Calvary hospital was the second worst. The extra cost of running Canberra's hospitals in one year would have been enough to treat 63,000 more acute patients.

The report says that as a result of new, innovative development work by the authority, they can make "meaningful comparisons of the relative efficiency" of Australian hospitals.

Minister, why has Canberra got the two most inefficient hospitals in Australia?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. There are a range of factors that drive the relative costs of delivering hospital services in the ACT compared to other jurisdictions. In particular, there are issues of historical legacies associated with particular employment conditions, such as generous superannuation schemes which were inherited from the commonwealth. This is one of the factors that drive the underlying cost base for the delivery of health services in the territory. There are other factors as well, such as the relatively broad scope of clinical services that are provided in the ACT and some of the difficulties with economies of scale in delivering those services compared to larger health systems. These are the types of issues that the authority notes in its report but that were not mentioned by Mr Hanson in his question. They are key factors that drive some of the costs associated with our hospital services.

That said, there are still a range of other issues that we need to continue to focus on. For example, we as a government have been able to drive down the level of growth in health funding over the past three to four years as a result of improvements in efficiency, improvements in the cost of delivery of service. Indeed, growth is now well below the eight per cent per annum high that it was three or four years ago.

So growth in expenditure is being constrained in our health system. But what is also worth noting is that we have significant pressures on our capacity to plan to meet future demand when we see significant reductions in funding from the federal government. We have the arbitrary reduction of funding in our healthcare sector from the federal government, through their refusal to honour the funding agreement set in place by the previous government—an impact on our healthcare system of over \$50 million. That is \$50 million ongoing in our health budget. That is an arbitrary removal of funding that is needed in our hospitals that the Abbott Liberal government have arbitrarily removed. They have arbitrarily removed it.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson.

MR CORBELL: Every health minister across the country, whether Labor or Liberal, is saying to the federal Liberal government that they need to reverse this position, because our hospital systems will not be able to manage demand, will not be able to meet growth, unless that funding is restored. We will be working collaboratively with our state and territory colleagues to make sure we get a fair deal. That fair deal can start next week with the federal budget, when we expect to see appropriate commitments for funding to our hospital system and the reversal of those cuts.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: On a point of order.

Mr Hanson: The question was not about how much money is spent or received; it was about the fact that the money that is spent is spent inefficiently—in fact, the most inefficient spending of money in Australia. I would ask the minister to address that point rather than talking about necessarily the quantum of that money.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the minister might have concluded his answer. You can ask a supplementary question.

MR HANSON: Minister, why are Canberrans paying more for services but waiting longer than other Australians for essential health services?

MR CORBELL: I note that this is really the same question again. In any event I have already addressed the member's question in relation to some of the factors that drive the relative cost of delivery of health services. As a government we are very focused on wanting to make sure that we improve the capacity of our health system to improve timeliness. And we have seen significant reductions in waiting times and significant improvements in timeliness in a number of key areas. For example, elective surgery is now at the lowest point it has been since 2005-06—a very significant improvement in elective surgery, with the highest number of removals ever achieved.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson.

MR CORBELL: Equally, we are investing in more capacity in our emergency departments. We are seeing significant improvements in waiting times in our emergency departments and we are building on that with investment in additional beds in the Canberra Hospital emergency department to give greater capacity. In the last month I have marked the commencement of a major upgrade of the Canberra Hospital emergency department that will deliver a 33 per cent increase in the number of beds in the emergency department. That is a really important investment.

So we are taking those steps, but we cannot do it alone. If the federal Liberal government continues to cut funding to our hospital systems, we will never be able to meet this growth in demand. Every jurisdiction around the country has the same problem. We need to see, in the federal budget next week, a commitment on the part of the federal Liberal government to reverse those cuts to our hospital system. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what are you doing to ensure Canberrans get value for money spent on hospital services?

MR CORBELL: We are continuing to make investments such as the one I outlined in my previous answer: expanding our emergency department by 33 per cent; investing in quality cancer care services at the new cancer facility at the Canberra Hospital; investing in effective, quality maternity services at the new Centenary Hospital for Women and Children; investing in a new community health centre in Gungahlin, upgrades in Tuggeranong and a new community health centre in Belconnen; investing in new adult mental health secure facilities; investing in new psychiatric facilities; and investing in the new University of Canberra public hospital. That is what the government are doing when it comes to health, but we need the commitment of the federal Liberal government. They cannot be allowed to get away with a \$50 million a year cut—

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order. Stop the clock, please.

Mr Hanson: The question asked by Ms Lawder was specifically about value for money. The minister cannot keep standing up here, talking about federal funding that was never allocated in a budget in relation to a question about value for money. It has nothing to do with the question. It is about value for money.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that is not a point of order. If you were going to make a point of order, you might refer to the standing orders. I think that was an argument that you did not quite like the answer that you were getting.

MR CORBELL: Value for money for taxpayers includes getting their fair share of commonwealth revenues for our hospital services. We have a federal Liberal government which has massively cut funding for health services here in the ACT. As a jurisdiction—

Mr Hanson: That's a lie!

MADAM SPEAKER: Withdraw, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Corbell, on the question.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As a jurisdiction we have invested over \$800 million worth of capital in our health system. We continue to make significant investments in growth funding each and every year. But we cannot do it on our own. We need the commitment of the federal Liberal government; we need Prime Minister Abbott to reverse his cuts to our hospital system. *(Time expired.)*

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, it is very hard to sit down Mr Corbell, when his time expires, if you keep interjecting across the chamber. A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, if Canberra's hospitals were more efficient, would waiting times improve in the emergency departments?

MR CORBELL: We need to continue to focus on meeting demand. The question that Ms Lawder asks is a difficult one to answer. It is difficult because there are a broad range of factors influencing demand. For example, a rapidly ageing population leads to a significant increase in the complexity of the care that needs to be provided, a level of complexity that outstrips population growth.

So we need funding models that help us address this demand and we have, unfortunately, a position on the part of the federal government to shift the funding model from activity-based funding to population-based funding. Shifting to population-based funding is fundamentally unfair. It is unfair because it fails to recognise the significant number of people who receive treatment across the border and it fails to acknowledge the increased acuity and level of care that needs to be provided for an ageing population.

So as a jurisdiction we are making the case very clearly to the commonwealth that population-based funding is not acceptable. We are making clear that they need to reverse their cuts to our hospital system. They need to restore the funding that they ripped out in last year's budget. A great opportunity to commence that is in next week's federal budget, where they make commitments for long-term security—

Mr Hanson: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson on a point of order.

Mr Hanson: Ms Lawder's question was about the efficiency of our hospitals. I would ask the minister to be directly relevant to why our hospitals are so inefficient rather than talking about federal funding that was never in any budget.

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister has gone to the same answer in relation to four separate questions. This was a question about whether efficiency would lead to shorter waiting times. I will uphold the point of order and ask the minister to be directly relevant. However, the member's time has expired.

Schools—autism

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the minister for education. Minister, on what date did the education directorate become aware of a cage-like structure that was constructed inside a Canberra public school?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. My office became aware of a complaint to the Children and Young People Commissioner on the Thursday before Easter. I am sorry; I do not have the date in my head. My office was advised of what that complaint was on the Friday, and that structure was removed. I sought advice on the Monday, sought further advice on the Tuesday, took the Wednesday to provide notice to the families of children at that school—

Mr Hanson: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order. Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: The question asked by Mr Doszpot was: on what date did the directorate become aware of a cage-like structure? The point of order is on relevance. The minister's response is about when her office found out and what happened subsequently. I would ask the minister to be directly relevant and to answer the question: on what date did the directorate become aware of a cage-like structure?

Dr Bourke: On the point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order.

Dr Bourke: The minister has only had 40 seconds of her four minutes. I am sure she will be getting to it shortly.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will remind the minister to be directly relevant. The question was a specific one. My notes say "on what date did the directorate become aware". So while the minister may add other information to that, it would be useful if she could answer that question directly.

MS BURCH: In answer, I became aware that the directorate was aware on the Thursday and Friday. This is also part of the internal review that will involve some of these details, and until that is concluded and I am able to report back to the Assembly I will just leave it at that.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, was any area of the education directorate asked for permission by the school concerned to construct the cage-like structure, and were permission and funding formally provided?

MS BURCH: Those are very good questions and form part of the internal HR review.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, how did the directorate become aware of this structure, and when was action first taken by the directorate?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, I did not hear the second part of that.

MR WALL: When was action first taken by the directorate?

MS BURCH: A number of these questions are part of the internal investigation that is currently underway, and I think that process needs to be resolved, in fairness to all. Going back to my response, whilst it may not satisfy you, my office became aware of the department only being aware on 26 and 27 March. If there is other information that comes forth as part of the internal investigation then so be it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: I will ask the minister again: how did the directorate become aware of this structure, and why did it take from 27 March until 2 April for your directorate and for you as minister for education to make public information about the structure that was dismantled a week prior?

MS BURCH: Again, it would have been helpful to let me finish the first answer. My office became aware that there was a complaint to the Human Rights Commission. And, please, be patient, because it does set out a time frame. On the Friday, the directorate visited the school involved and ordered the removal of the structure. That was the first time that my office became aware of the content of the complaint—on the Friday.

The structure was removed, so there was no immediate concern for me, other than a whole lot of other stuff around it. On Monday I sought advice. On Tuesday I sought more advice. At that point action was put in place, on the Tuesday. That also included taking the time on Wednesday to give notice to the board, the P&C and families, and I went public on Thursday with all of that. That explains the time line.

Mr Wall: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mr Wall: It is on relevance. The first part of the question was: how did the directorate become aware? The minister has been asked this twice and has still failed to answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you have anything more to add?

Ms Burch: No.

ACTION bus service—network

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, on 18 May the ACTION timetable will be updated, just eight months since the introduction of network 14. The changes to the network include a reduction of the route 200 and 202 services running from the Gungahlin town centre to the city but an increase in the number of services which run from Gungahlin suburbs to the city. These include routes 56, 57, 58, 251, 252, 255 and 259. Minister, why did the government opt for integrated Gungahlin suburbs to the city over routes 200 and 202?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, Mr Coe is right. There is set to be an update to the timetable on 18 May. He alluded to the fact that it is just eight months after the introduction of network 14. This is quite deliberate and this will be a pattern that members will see on an ongoing basis. We will expect to see an update of the timetable about every six months.

With the provision of both MyWay data and NXTBUS data, there is an ability to continue to hone the timetable to particularly improve on-time running, as we are able to take account of things like Constitution Avenue construction works but also network 14 hitting the ground. Although there were test runs to measure it, the actual performance of the network has proved to be different in some places where services have either run too early or run too late. That is the purpose of the change on 18 May.

When it comes to Gungahlin, there is an increase of services out of Gungahlin in the mornings particularly because we were seeing overcrowding on some services, despite the fact that network 14 brought in additional services to Gungahlin. Further, since network 14 has come in there has still been an increase in demand. We have seen continued overcrowding, including through until 10 am. So one of the things that is a feature after 18 May is the introduction of additional services past 9 am because we are seeing that that peak period is lasting longer and some of the key pressures are after 9 am.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, who is the current general manager of ACTION buses? Has there been a change and, if so, what was the rationale for that change?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, there have been some changes in personnel at ACTION. This is part of the government's efforts to make improvements in the running of ACTION. Some staff have been moved to a dedicated work stream in order to work on matters around the improvement overall of ACTION, as opposed to day-to-day operational matters, which is where ACTION staff tend to be focused.

Mr Coe: On a point of order, the question was: who is the current general manager of ACTION buses? I would think the minister would be able to answer that.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, I do not know whether the minister concluded his answer.

MR RATTENBURY: I have finished my answer, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, who is the current general manager of ACTION buses? And if you do not know, why don't you?

MR RATTENBURY: Madam Speaker, I am going to take some advice on that, because what has happened is that we have restructured the ACTION team and I am trying to think whether that actual title remains in place or not. That is why I have not specifically provided a direct response to that answer. I am happy to take that on notice and come back to the Assembly with clarification. I just want to check the new structure of the team and the titles that are attached to those positions.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Regardless of title, minister, who is running ACTION buses on behalf of the ACT government?

MR RATTENBURY: It depends at which point of the chain Mr Hanson would like me to answer the question. I am the responsible minister. It could be Gary Byles, as the Director-General of TAMS, or Paul Peters, the head of roads and public transport. Exactly how far down the chain does Mr Hanson want me to go?

ACT Policing—budget

MR SMYTH: My question is to the minister for territories—no, sorry; my question is to the minister for police. That was just such a good question without an answer.

Minister, in a *Canberra Times* article dated 28 April 2015, it was said by the Australian Federal Police Association that budget cuts of \$15 million to the ACT's police force will affect front-line services, despite promises that police on the beat will not lose their jobs. The ABC news and the *Canberra Times* have reported in the last three months that ACT communities had concerns over domestic violence, the use of ice, bikie gangs, and recent homicides.

Minister, did you consult with the AFPA over these pending budget cuts and efficiency gains?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Smyth for his question. The general saving measures that the Chief Police Officer is finding through ACT Policing will not impinge on the service or take front-line officers off the beat, so to speak. And as far as any communication with the CPO and the police association is concerned, it is for him to work through it as he finds those general savings.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will you guarantee no jobs will be lost as a result of your cuts?

MS BURCH: This is where we get into the rule in and rule out. I think all of us on this side understand the need to quarantine and make sure that front-line services, those officers on the beat, are maintained, and we will give that guarantee.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, how many jobs do you plan to cut from ACT Policing to meet these efficiency gains?

MS BURCH: The rulers of the blunt instruments over there only see general savings as loss of staff, and that is not always the answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why will you not rule out job cuts?

MS BURCH: I think I have been quite clear. Anyone who has asked me this has been told that front-line services will be maintained. At the moment the purchasing agreement has an FTE of 932. There are more full-time equivalent positions within ACT Policing. Does that mean if we go under any particular measure on any particular day that is a loss of workers? I do not think so.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson.

MS BURCH: ACT Policing are well resourced, they serve this community well, they have general savings to make and they will do it. As the attorney has indicated, quarter after quarter, ACT Policing are serving our community well and crime trends go down.

Economy—policy

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, could you please outline what the government is doing to encourage job growth and investment in the territory?

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Chief Minister, Mr Hanson, you have been incessantly interjecting throughout question time. I have called you to order on a number of occasions. You need to consider whether you want to stay in question time.

MR BARR: The Labor Party is committed to supporting jobs growth in the territory. We will leave the job cutting to the Liberal Party. You are expert in doing that. You have been doing it locally and nationally since you came into existence as a political party.

The ACT government's focus is on growing our economy, diversifying our economy and supporting jobs growth. Through our business development strategy we have been achieving those goals, fostering the right business environment, supporting new business investment in the ACT economy and, most importantly, accelerating innovation in our economy.

To do this we have established Invest Canberra and the CBR Innovation Network. Invest Canberra was launched in 2013. It is a dedicated investment facilitation function within ACT government. It comprises a team of investment facilitation professionals that support a range of actions to encourage new investment in the territory economy—locally, nationally and internationally sourced new investment. This ranges from high-level marketing and positioning, right through to case-specific management and to key decision-making points where there is a role for the territory government to facilitate investment.

In relation to trade, we as a community are now exporting more than \$1.2 billion in services each year. That is nearly 2½ per cent of Australia's service exports. Canberra has about 1½ per cent of the national population and we are exporting nearly 2½ per cent of Australia's service exports. So it is an area of considerable growth, and something that ought to be celebrated—the success of exporters, particularly service exporters from the territory.

Through our trade delegation work, we are enabling this rapidly growing sector to continue to grow. Over the last 18 months we have organised a range of delegations to key markets, including China, Singapore and the United States.

I would like to take a moment now to highlight some of the notable successes coming out of the ACT government's trade development activities. These include Intelledox, who recently won two ACT export awards and announced a major partnership with global entity Fuji Xerox during a recent Singapore trade mission. Datapod has completed its first sale into the North American public sector market. Its growing list of clients includes the CSIRO, BHP Billiton, Saab Technologies, Papua New Guinea Maritime, and the Australian federal government. Seeing Machines, the current ACT Exporter of the Year, has recently opened an office in California and has contracts in Latin America. It is also partnering with Toshiba to develop new uses for its technology.

The CBR Innovation Network, which was formally launched in November last year, links the government and business community directly to five major research institutions in Canberra—the ANU, the CSIRO, NICTA, the University of Canberra and the University of New South Wales. Through this partnership we can continue to diversify the territory's economy, to develop emerging enterprises, to support our export capabilities and to grow local employment opportunities.

The network is also home to the Entry 29 co-working space and the Griffin accelerator. It is working in collaboration with the business community and, through a pilot small and medium enterprises growth program, is targeting small business growth and putting in place strategies to enhance competitiveness and business improvement across the small business sector in the territory.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Chief Minister, how will Qantas's decision to base 40 high-skilled jobs and make new investments in Canberra encourage wider growth in the territory?

MR BARR: I was very pleased last month to be able to announce, with QantasLink CEO John Gissing, that they will locate their heavy maintenance for the entire Boeing 717 fleet of 18 aircraft at Canberra Airport. This investment in new jobs and technical capabilities builds on the 260 Qantas Group employees who are already based in Canberra. It certainly will expand Qantas's footprint here in the national capital and complement the increased usage of the 717 aircraft here in Canberra. The estimated value of this new arrangement for the ACT economy is around \$5 million a year, and the agreement allows for the program to expand.

Attracting investment like this from a major national employer, Qantas, is a vote of confidence in the territory economy. It demonstrates the government's commitment to growing our aviation sector, in partnership with the airlines and with Canberra Airport.

This, of course, includes attracting international flights to our city. This will support tourism, infrastructure development and our strengths in education. The technicians who are part of this maintenance contract bring new skills and technology to our city, which can, in partnership with our education institutions, grow education pathways and attract more jobs and aviation investment to Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, how will IKEA's employment requirements stimulate growth in the territory economy?

MR BARR: IKEA is another major international business investing in Canberra. Its presence in Canberra is great for jobs and it is great for our economy. It certainly is a vote of confidence in this city and in this region's economic future. IKEA is already on site and the construction program is on track. It is well advanced in appointing and selecting a significant workforce. It is looking to employ around 250 people with a wide range of valuable skills.

IKEA has started this process and is currently training a large number of its Canberra staff at its other stores around Australia. These jobs will be across all areas of the business, including in the furniture showroom, sales, the restaurant, the play areas and the warehouse, as well as in special fields such as interior design, visual merchandising and management.

We know that many shoppers from Canberra and the region currently travel interstate, particularly to Sydney, to utilise IKEA stores and that Canberrans spend a significant amount on IKEA products. That money is currently being spent in Sydney. Those funds will now be kept within the territory and residents from the surrounding regions will come to Canberra, as IKEA is a major drawcard. This will benefit other businesses in the territory and stimulate our economy.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, why is it important to encourage these diverse forms of investment in the territory economy?

MR BARR: Undoubtedly, in recent times the territory economy has been significantly impacted by the decisions of the commonwealth government. Approximately 30 per cent of the territory economy's gross value-add is created in the public sector. So diversification through investment in industries where Canberra has a competitive advantage helps to manage the impacts of the significant risk that is faced by our city, one that we have all seen materialise in the last 18 months in particular, and that has been the commonwealth's significant reduction in employment and spending in Canberra.

Our increased investment across a broad range of industries develops a wider range of employment opportunities in Canberra. Not only is it important to the economy as a whole but its most significant difference is what this means for Canberra households, Canberra families, where quality of life is undoubtedly improved by having a job. A more diverse range of work opportunities for our community is good for our community.

Without further investment to grow and diversify our economy, the people of the ACT will remain subject to decisions made by politicians from interstate, particularly conservative politicians who have no particular love for the city of Canberra. And this is why the territory Labor government will always continue to pursue strategies to grow Canberra's economy, to create more jobs and to support this city, because we stand up for Canberra.

Planning—master plans

MR WALL: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, following pressure from the community and the Canberra Liberals, your government agreed to proceed with master plans for Tharwa village and Calwell. When will implementation of the master plans for both Calwell and Tharwa village commence?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Wall for his interest in the areas of Tharwa and Calwell. Yes, the master plans for those areas are in preparation. I am just looking for the date when we can look at implementation. We will certainly start to consult with the community as soon as we possibly can. I have had some conversations with the Tharwa community on what they want to see in their master plan. I can come back to you with those dates as soon as I get the detail.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, why has it taken so long to proceed with the agreed master planning of these two important areas?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Wall for the supplementary question. It does take time to get these master plans into place and organised. There is quite a deal of work that goes into the master planning process and it all has relevance. So some larger areas have been identified for master planning work before the smaller areas such as group centres like Calwell or rural areas like Tharwa.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: What consultation and communication have taken place between the ACT government and residents and business owners in Calwell and Tharwa village about the proposed master plans?

MR GENTLEMAN: There have been a number of conversations between me personally and business owners and the community in both Tharwa and Calwell, and the directorate has also had conversations with the business community and the community in general.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, when did the most recent communication take place, from both you and the directorate, with the traders at Calwell?

MR GENTLEMAN: I received a brief from the directorate in regard to the master planning process roughly two weeks ago.

Expenditure review—concessions

MS LAWDER: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, on 17 March this year you announced public consultation on an expenditure review of the ACT's concessions program. The discussion paper states, "All input received will be made publicly available on the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate website." The last day of public consultation was weeks ago, on 10 April. Minister, why have you not released the submissions received during public consultation?

MR BARR: It is the government's intention to make that information available, but in the intervening couple of weeks those submissions and the various issues pertaining to the concessions program have been the subject of cabinet consideration. The government will make further announcements in relation to the concessions program in due course.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, when will you release the submissions received during public consultation, given that the submissions remain the submissions irrespective of cabinet consultation?

MR BARR: The government will make available the submissions and an issues paper in relation to possible options for reform of concessions in the coming weeks. I will make a package of information available for community feedback before any decisions are taken in relation to the concessions program.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how will reducing funding for concessions for the most vulnerable people in our community help them?

MR BARR: The government is not proposing to reduce funding in the way that the shadow minister has indicated. Let me be clear that that is not the government's intention. The government has looked, through this process, at ways to deliver more support to those most vulnerable. Our focus has been particularly on ensuring that those on the lowest incomes receive support. As I have indicated in this place previously, our focus is on eliminating middle-class welfare and welfare for those who are well off, and redistributing the benefits of any reform to lower income Canberrans.

I do note that a similar process is underway nationally. We will await particular decisions in the federal budget next week that will inform future community discussion on this matter. For those who are interested, this process has a long way still to go. The government will make public the submissions and the issues paper on the variety of options that are available to us to reform concessions in the future, with a view to maximising the benefits to those Canberrans with the lowest income and ensuring that our concessions program is targeted to those most in need. That is how a concessions program should operate.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why should the people struggling most in our community have their concessions reduced, as they expect they will be, or cut because of your government's mismanagement of taxpayers' money and resulting huge budget deficit?

MR BARR: Sometimes, Madam Speaker, you have to wonder about the ability of those opposite to adjust their questions on the basis of answers. I have been very clear, in response to the series of questions, that the accusation that the shadow minister makes is not based on fact; it is untrue. Let me be very clear that the assertions made by the shadow minister are not the government's intent. The government's intent is to ensure that concessions are delivered to those most in need. That is our policy objective. That is what the Labor Party and the Greens party believe. That has been the subject of our discussions, to ensure that concessions are delivered to those most in need.

I know the Liberal Party do not believe that. I know they have a different view, and they are entitled to have a different view on how government concessions should be delivered. But it is our view that government concessions should be delivered to those most in need. We will put forward a range of options to the community, following the submissions process and our consideration of the work that has been undertaken to date, before any decisions are made in relation to the concessions program.

Crime—domestic violence

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, can you please tell the Assembly about recent actions the ACT government has undertaken to tackle the issue of violence in personal relationships?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. As a government and, I believe, as an Assembly, we are committed to an effective whole-of-government response and a community response to the problem of domestic violence in our city. The recent attention that has been given to domestic and family violence has seen strong support at both a national and a local level, and it has reinforced the importance of domestic violence response and prevention as a high priority for the government.

In early April, as members would be aware, there was a very successful meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council. This extraordinary meeting, as a result of a tripartisan resolution in this place, supported an important conversation among a large number of stakeholders, including non-government and government agencies, on issues around services and responses to victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence. The Domestic Violence Prevention Council have now provided me with their final report as a result of that extraordinary meeting, outlining a number of recommendations for addressing domestic and family violence, including sexual assault.

The government is already working actively to make legal reforms to help prevent domestic and family violence. I have recently announced a major family violence legislative reform program that will address the 131 recommendations directly relevant to the territory from the Australian and New South Wales law reform commissions' report into family violence.

As a government we are also exploring options to address immediate concerns raised by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the family violence intervention program, with a bill anticipated to be introduced later this year. This bill, as I have previously announced, will include a new strangulation offence and allow police to record a complainant's statement and use that as primary evidence of the complainant at any subsequent hearing.

In addition, we as a government have announced reforms to the victims of crime financial assistance scheme to better respond to those in our community who experience family violence and who have previously been excluded from many of the beneficial elements of that scheme. As a government we are also a signatory to the national plan to reduce violence against women and children. We have held, since 2012, over five roundtables on the development of responses to and implementation of the national strategy's recommendations.

It is worth highlighting also that last year I wrote to the Domestic Violence Prevention Council requesting that it undertake a review into the 72 domestic violence related deaths that occurred in the ACT between 1988 and 2012. This review, when it is received later this year, will assist the government and, I hope, the Assembly in getting a robust and independent picture of domestic and family violence in the ACT and inform appropriate policy responses. The government has provided additional funding to those non-government organisations that support responses to family violence, including the most recent disbursements from the confiscated assets trust fund which I announced earlier this year.

With those combined efforts, I believe that as a jurisdiction we are working very hard to respond to this scourge in our community. I thank members for their support of this effort. We will be continuing with this very proactive reform agenda.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Attorney, can you please elaborate on what the outcomes were from the extraordinary meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council held on 2 April 2015?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary. It was a very positive gathering of stakeholders, service providers, policymakers and victims of domestic violence from across the ACT. It was extraordinary in many ways. For me, I think the most extraordinary outcome was to be able to hear directly, in a way that is rarely available to policymakers, the experience of victims and their stories.

There were some very powerful stories from victims who, very bravely, I believe, chose to stand up and speak of their experiences of domestic violence itself and of the criminal justice system's response. I want to commend them and thank them for the bravery that they showed and the insights that they shared on that day.

Importantly also, we were able to see exactly the key priorities of stakeholder groups and the emphasis they attached to some immediate and further practical action to resolve and address the concerns and the experiences of victims—whether it is ensuring that interim domestic violence protection orders are able to remain in force if they are associated with criminal proceedings, or that there are greater linkages between domestic violence service providers and the criminal justice system through the FVIP, or a range of other measures.

I think there were some powerful messages for us out of that meeting. The government and I, as the attorney—and I know along with my colleagues, particularly Ms Berry and Mr Gentleman—remain very committed to ensuring that we use that momentum to make further reform to reduce the incidence of this type of crime in our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Attorney, can you please explain in more detail to the Assembly what legislative reforms the government has announced in this area?

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Ms Fitzharris, for the supplementary. I have mentioned already the new provisions that the government has announced it will introduce to the Assembly later this year to create, in the first instance, a new strangulation offence, which will have a lower threshold than the existing strangulation offence of an act endangering life under section 27 of the Crimes Act. Strangulation is established as an action which is a predictive risk factor for future severe domestic violence and for homicide. It is commonly alleged by women who have experienced domestic violence, and the new offence is proposed to ensure that victims are adequately protected by the law.

It is also proposed to ensure that, through amendments to the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1991, police will be allowed to record evidence of complainants' statements and this can be used as evidence-in-chief. These new special measures will allow fresh evidence to be presented clearly and effectively during a hearing, and will avoid instances where a victim has to present evidence to a court often months after an assault. Clearer evidence, provided to the defence at the beginning of a matter, could also support earlier pleas of guilty and reduce associated trauma to victims. So there are good reasons to pursue these reforms.

In addition, the government has begun consultation with the community about the recommendations contained in the commonwealth and New South Wales law reform commissions' report into family violence. This includes investigation of how police-issued domestic violence orders could be adopted in the ACT. I anticipate introducing, early next year, the first stage of reforms to begin addressing the 131 ALRC recommendations that are specific to the territory. These are the types of efforts we will continue to make on this important issue. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Attorney, are you able to explain in more detail what the recent changes to the victims of crime financial assistance scheme will mean for victims?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her supplementary. The objectives of the reforms to the victims of crime financial assistance scheme I have recently announced are the result of ensuring that victims of violent crime recover, by the provision of financial assistance for expenses as well as recognition, through recognition payments, of harm that has been suffered.

Currently, the majority of victims, including many victims of domestic violence, are not eligible for special assistance payments unless an extremely serious injury has been incurred which is permanent in nature. This is an extremely strict test and makes it very difficult for a broad range of victims of crime, including victims of domestic violence, to receive payments under this scheme.

The proposed new scheme that I announced earlier this year will be more accessible. Applicants will no longer be required to lodge complex court forms or appear in court for out-of-time applications. Instead, the Victims of Crime Commissioner will administer the new scheme. This will provide easier and timely decision-making, with less requirement—indeed, little requirement—to have the matters dealt with in court.

We will also broaden the scope of eligibility for victims. This means that those who experience intimidation and harassment become eligible for payment under the scheme. No longer do you need to demonstrate a physical act of violence to receive assistance. This is also important for victims of domestic and family violence. We know how critical verbal violence and intimidation are in that domestic violence space, and those types of criminal acts also need to be responded to through recognition in this scheme.

These reforms will ensure also that victims of domestic violence can receive urgent assistance payments, including for emergency accommodation and relocation costs.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Planning—master plans

MR GENTLEMAN: In relation to Mr Wall's question on master plans earlier on, I said that I would provide some more details on the timing for those. I can advise that the Tharwa master plan stage 1 has been completed—the infrastructure study. Work is being finalised on stage 2 of the study to investigate non-potable water supply options for the village. Project scoping is underway in the preparation to engage with the local community on the development of the rural village plan for that area. On Calwell, a project scoping study has commenced, with the formal community engagement anticipated to commence mid this year.

ACTION bus service—network

MR RATTENBURY: Further to the earlier questions about the structure of ACTION, as I indicated in my answers the reason for my hesitation is that the position of general manager of ACTION no longer exists. If I try and read between the lines of Mr Coe's question, perhaps the best answer I can give is that the Chief Operating Officer of ACTION is Bren Burkevics.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Report No 2/2015—The Rehabilitation of Male Detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, dated 17 April 2015.

Assistant Speakers—warrant of nomination, pursuant to standing order 8—Mr Doszpot, for the period 27 April to 4 May 2015, dated 9 April 2015.

Acting Speaker—Instrument of Appointment, pursuant to standing order 6A—Assistant Speakers, Dr Bourke, for the period 19 to 26 April 2015, and Mr Doszpot, for the period 27 April to 4 May 2015, dated 15 April 2015.

Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Border Protection—Relocation from Belconnen—Letter to the Speaker from Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, dated 24 March 2015, concerning the resolution of the Assembly of 11 February 2015.

Domestic and Family Violence—Letter to the Speaker from Mr Corbell MLA, Attorney-General, dated 7 April 2015, concerning the resolution of the Assembly of 18 March 2015.

Standing order 191—Amendments to the Public Pools Bill 2014, dated 27 March 2015.

MADAM SPEAKER: For the information of members, I point out that Dr Bourke and Mr Doszpot were acting speakers because Ms Porter and I were absent from the ACT at the same time, which is unusual, but we could not get around it in any other way.

University of Canberra annual report Paper and statement by minister

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

University of Canberra Act, pursuant to section 36—University of Canberra—Annual Report 2014 (2 volumes), dated April 2015.

I ask for leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: For the information of members, I table the University of Canberra annual report for 2014. Madam Speaker, a strong University of Canberra is critical to the ACT's higher education sector and to our wider economy. The recent federal coalition job cuts have underscored the need for us to continue to diversify the territory's economy. Our higher education and research sector can play a valuable role. They currently add \$2.75 billion to the territory economy each year and support almost 16,000 jobs.

Canberra is one of the world's top student cities. It certainly makes sense for us to play to our strengths, and that is why this government is supporting the growth of our higher education. The university that bears our city's name is a key part of this economic renewal. We will continue building on the foundations of the University of Canberra campus growth and improvement that has been laid out by Vice-Chancellor Professor Stephen Parker by taking the necessary action in this place to facilitate up to \$1 billion worth of new investment on the University of Canberra campus.

The annual report of the university shows that in 2014 the University of Canberra and its controlled entities reported positive financial results, with a surplus of \$10.3 million in 2014 compared with \$6.1 million in 2013. The University of Canberra went through a period of significant transformation in 2014, with new buildings opening for student accommodation, sporting facilities and health services, and seeing the campus become a revitalised space for the benefit of students, staff and the broader Canberra community.

The expansion of the University of Canberra's campus supports the university's continued growth in student numbers. In 2014, the University of Canberra's equivalent full-time student load was 11,697. This represents an 18.4 per cent growth in student load since 2010. To provide for this growth, the University of Canberra built a total of 660 new student beds in 2014, which saw the university offer an accommodation guarantee to all first year and international students, which of course gives peace of mind to those students and to their parents and carers.

The university has continued to be an active player in the economic and social wellbeing of our local community, with the opening of new facilities such as the \$15 million health hub providing further local health services, including Canberra's first GP super clinic and the university's popular student-delivered allied health clinics that deliver a range of services such as physiotherapy and dietetics. The new University of Canberra public hospital will add significantly to the wellbeing of the ACT. This facility and the health hub will form part of a larger health innovation precinct that will include the public hospital, which is of course a significant partnership with the territory government.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I had the pleasure of opening the university's new \$16 million state-of-the-art sporting commons facility, which is of course headquarters for the Brumbies and the training base for the University of Canberra Capitals. It also houses a range of research facilities and gymnasium space, including the newly established University of Canberra Research Institute for Sport and Exercise. This facility builds upon the University of Canberra's reputation as one of Australia's leading tertiary institutions for sport and related studies. This again contributes to the university's growth and its capacity to attract students to the ACT.

Chancellor Professor Tom Calma AO was formally installed following his address at the National Press Club on 20 February 2014. The 2013 ACT Australian of the Year became the sixth chancellor of the University of Canberra and the first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander man to hold the position of chancellor of any Australian university. 2014 also saw the University of Canberra retain its world ranking for the second consecutive year in the QS world university rankings.

The University of Canberra was named an employer of choice for gender equality in November, recognising its commitment to gender equity in the workplace. The university was one of only 76 organisations in Australia to receive this prestigious citation and one of only two in the ACT.

In research, 2014 was perhaps the best year yet for the University of Canberra, with recruitment of some of the world's best researchers and academics, attracting significant grants, and with the university demonstrating improved performance and developing new partnerships. The annual report shows competitive research income increased by more than \$1 million, from \$3.365 million in 2012 to \$4,467 million in 2013, which the latest data available. Research output was up by 27 per cent.

The government and I, as Chief Minister and minister with responsibility for higher education and economic development, look forward to continuing to work with this

proud Canberra institution in the coming years. Under the leadership of Professor Parker and with the support of the territory government, the university continues to grow and prosper.

During my recent visit to China, I was delighted to join Professor Parker as he renewed an agreement with Renmin University in Beijing, our sister city, reaffirming a commitment to their student articulation program, to staff exchanges and to their joint research collaboration.

In closing, Madam Assistant Speaker, let me be very clear: the ACT government will continue to actively support the development and growth of the higher education sector in Canberra. The University of Canberra is a massive part of our future as an innovative and attractive destination for the best students, the best thinkers and the best teachers across the world's universities. This government will deliver on that promise for this city.

Canberra Airport Pty Ltd—memorandum of understanding Paper and statement by minister

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

Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Capital Territory and Canberra Airport Pty Ltd, dated 8 April 2015.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: For the information of members, I table the revised memorandum of understanding between the ACT government and Canberra Airport. Canberra Airport has a significant role to play as a regional gateway and as a generator of investment and employment in our city. In recognition of the airport's significant role, on Wednesday, 8 April I joined with the managing director of Canberra International Airport, Mr Stephen Byron, to formally sign the revised MOU.

This revised MOU reinforces the ongoing positive and collaborative relationship that the territory government enjoys with the airport and reflects the ongoing joint commitment to market our city as a destination of choice and as a transport hub to airlines, to increase visitors, both domestic and international, in our key markets, to increase opportunities for the export of products and services from Canberra and the surrounding region, to attract new air services that will help grow the ACT and the surrounding regional economy and to create hundreds of new jobs for our city.

The practical benefits of our joint commitment are demonstrated, for example, in the recent QantasLink announcement that it will bring 40 new high tech engineering jobs to Canberra by relocating the heavy maintenance requirement for the entire 717 fleet of 18 aircraft to the ACT. The estimated value of the new arrangement to the ACT

economy, as I mentioned in question time, is around \$5 million annually. But along with this economic contribution is an important addition to our economy of an invaluable array of skills and contacts for the ACT's high tech engineering sector.

Attracting direct international flights to Canberra Airport will be another important step forward for this city, for the airport and for the regional economy. It will bring hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in tourism benefits, benefits to the professional services sector and to our export sectors.

I take this opportunity this afternoon to acknowledge Canberra Airport's significant investment in the future of Canberra, particularly its development of a world-class aviation facility that is fully ready for international flights. I also acknowledge the airport's recent achievements, including the 2013 Australian airport of the year award, the recently announced QantasLink heavy maintenance base and its win at the recent Australian tourism awards, on behalf of our city, in specialised tourism services. I commend this revised MOU to the Assembly.

Papers

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

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

Long-term contracts:

- Daniel Childs, dated 16 April 2015.
- David Miller, dated 23 March 2015.
- Gregory Hammond, dated 30 March 2015.
- Veronica Croome, dated 18 March 2015.
- Vicki Parker, dated 25 March 2015.

Short-term contracts:

- Andrew Pedersen, dated 18 March 2015.
- Benjamin Ponton, dated 16 and 20 April 2015.
- Brett Monger, dated 21 April 2015.
- Caroline Hughes, dated 23 and 25 March 2015.
- Danielle Chesher, dated 31 March and 2 April 2015.
- Elizabeth Lopa, dated 24 and 30 March 2015.
- Helen Pappas, dated 18 March 2015.
- Ian Hubbard, dated 10 April 2015.
- John Wynants, dated 24 and 25 March 2015.
- Kaaren Blom, dated 13 April 2015.
- Margaret Cicolini, dated 7 and 21 April 2015.
- Nicholas Holt, dated 23 and 25 March 2015.

Paul Ogden, dated 8 and 9 April 2015.
Peter Brayshaw, dated 7 and 8 April 2015.
Philip Canham, dated 10 and 18 April 2015.
Therese Gehrig, dated 26 March 2015.

Contract variations:

Andrew Baker, dated 30 March 2015.
Christopher Wilson, dated 7 April 2015.
David Snowden, dated 13 April 2015.
Duncan Edghill, dated 16 and 18 March 2015.
Glenn Bain, dated 20 and 21 April 2015.
Phillip Perram, dated 12 and 14 April 2015.
Timothy Norris, dated 26 and 30 March 2015.

Financial Management Act—instruments Papers and statement by minister

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

Financial Management Act—Instruments, including statements of reasons, pursuant to—

Section 14—Instrument directing a transfer of funds within the Office of the Legislative Assembly, dated 28 April 2015.

Section 16—Directing a transfer of appropriations from the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, dated 20 April 2015.

Section 16B—Authorising the rollover of undisbursed appropriations of the—

ACT Local Hospital Network, dated 8 April 2015; and

Health Directorate, dated 8 April 2015.

Section 17—Instrument varying appropriations relating to Commonwealth funding to the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate, excluding a statement of reasons, dated 23 April 2015.

Section 18A—Authorisation of Expenditure from the Treasurer's Advance to Community Services Directorate, dated 14 April 2015.

Section 19B—Varying appropriations related to the Education and Training Directorate, dated 16 April 2015.

I seek leave to make a brief statement in relation to the papers.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: As required by the Financial Management Act 1996, I am this afternoon tabling a total of seven instruments issued under sections 14, 16, 16B, 17, 18 and 19B.

Advice on each instrument's direction and a statement of reasons is required to be tabled in the Assembly within three sitting days after it is given.

Section 14 of the act allows for the transfer of funds between appropriations. It is endorsed by me and another minister. I table one such instrument today. It transfers a total of \$122,000 from payments for expenses on behalf of the territory, comprising \$49,000 to capital injection (controlled) and \$73,000 to capital injection (territorial) for the Office of the Legislative Assembly.

Section 16 of the Financial Management Act provides that the Treasurer may, by instrument, transfer the responsibility for a service or function from an entity for which an appropriation is made to another entity. I table one such instrument today under this section. It facilitates the transfer of \$555,000 in capital injection (controlled) appropriation from the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate for capital works projects being undertaken by the ACT Property Group.

Section 16B of the act allows for the Treasurer to authorise an appropriation to be rolled over from one financial year to the next. This package includes two instruments authorised under section 16B. The first transfers undisbursed appropriation for the Health Directorate from the 2013-14 fiscal year to the 2014-15 fiscal year. That includes \$2.924 million in net cost of outputs and \$15.452 million in capital injection (controlled). The second instrument transfers undisbursed appropriation for the ACT local hospital network from the 2013-14 fiscal year to the 2014-15 fiscal year. In this instance the transfer is \$4.373 million in net cost of outputs.

I table one instrument this afternoon under section 17. Section 17 enables variations to appropriations for any increases in existing commonwealth payments by direction of the Treasurer. The territory has received additional commonwealth funding in 2014-15 of \$13.08 million of capital injection (controlled) appropriation for the building Australia fund roads—Majura parkway construction national partnership. The increase in commonwealth funding for the 2014-15 fiscal year will be offset by a commensurate reduction of commonwealth funding in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Section 18 of the FMA provides for the Treasurer to authorise expenditure from the Treasurer's advance. This package includes one such instrument that provides an increase of \$11.029 million in net cost of outputs for the Community Services Directorate to meet cash requirements. Specifically, the supplementary funding is required to meet additional cost pressures associated with supporting additional Disability ACT clients with higher levels of emergency support services, increased workers compensation premiums and extending funds for emergency relief and financial aid in 2015.

Section 19B of the FMA allows, by direction from the Treasurer, for an appropriation to be authorised for any new commonwealth payments where no appropriation has been made in respect of those funds. This package includes one such instrument for the territory receiving an additional \$966,000 in grant funding from the commonwealth for the national school chaplaincy program national partnership. This appropriation will provide for pastoral care services in all ACT schools to support students and the broader school community.

Additional details regarding these instruments are provided in the statement of reasons that accompanies each of the instruments that I have tabled this afternoon. I commend them to the Assembly.

Industry panel declaration and report Papers and statement by minister

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

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Act, pursuant to section 24—Industry Panel—

Review of the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission's 2013 Price Direction for Regulated Water and Sewerage Services in the ACT—Final Report, dated April 2015; and

Substituted Price Direction—Regulated Water and Sewerage Services—1 July 2013 to 30 June 2018, dated April 2015.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: As the referring authority for the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Act 1997, I present to the Assembly the following two reports of the Industry Panel: the Industry Panel review of the ICRC's 2013 price direction for regulated water and sewerage services—final report, April 2015; and the Industry Panel substituted price direction—regulated water and sewerage services—1 July 2013 to 30 June 2018, dated April 2015.

The tabling of the final report and substituted price direction represents the final step in the Industry Panel review process which commenced in April 2014 following an application by Icon Water Ltd to review the price direction made by the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, the ICRC, for regulated water and sewerage services from 1 July 2013.

The Industry Panel's final report and substituted price direction for regulated water and sewerage prices in the ACT presents the results of an extensive investigation by the Industry Panel which involved ongoing consultation with the community and key stakeholders, with public hearings held throughout the process and written submissions received from interested members of the community.

The Industry Panel's final report outlines the panel's final decisions on the pricing path for water and sewerage prices in the ACT for the next three years, with the revised regulatory period to conclude on 30 June 2018. As indicated in the Industry Panel's final report for 2015-16, water prices will decrease by 3.4 per cent in real terms and sewerage prices will increase by 1.4 per cent in real terms. These will be followed by CPI increases in 2016-17 and 2017-18. However, the finalised prices to

apply from 1 July 2015 will be confirmed in June 2015 following a process by the ICRC to adjust prices, if necessary, for any eligible cost pass-through events, as allowed for under the Industry Panel's substituted price direction.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Industry Panel President, Ms Mary Anne Hartley QC, and the Industry Panel members, Ms Sally Farrier and Ms Claire Thomas PSM, for their work in undertaking the Industry Panel review. I commend these reports to the Assembly.

Paper

Ms Burch presented the following paper:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Report 2014—Canberra Institute of Technology, dated 13 March 2015.

Planning and Development Act—variation No 322 to the territory plan

Paper and statement by minister

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval of Variation No 322 to the Territory Plan—ACT Government Land Release Program—Downer Urban Renewal Area—Downer section 61, block 17 and block 16—Zoning changes and changes to the Downer precinct map and code, dated 30 April 2015, together with background papers, a copy of the summaries and reports, and a copy of any direction or report required.

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

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: Variation 322 to the territory plan proposes to change the zoning of the former Downer primary school from community facility to RZ5 residential high density zone. A change to the zoning for the Downer community centre is also proposed, from CZ4 local centre to CFZ, community facility zone.

The variation for the sites in Downer was part of an omnibus of seven draft variations to the territory plan that was released in 2014 in support of the government's land release and public housing redevelopment programs. Variation 322 is the third variation that I have approved from the package of sites. The remaining four draft variations are still under review and will be provided to me in due course.

The Downer primary school was closed in the late 1980s. Since then it has been used for a range of purposes, such as accommodation for start-up businesses and

community organisations. In 2011 the government and CHC Affordable Housing Canberra started talking to the Downer community about the redevelopment of the site. Through that process various options and concept proposals showing how the site could be developed were discussed. This resulted in a planning report which was submitted to the Environment and Planning Directorate to inform the preparation of a variation.

When variation 322 was released for statutory public comment between 7 November and 19 December 2014 it attracted 21 public submissions, with concerns focusing on the height of the buildings, the proposed density of the site and potential traffic and parking impacts.

A number of changes have been made to variation 322 in response to the issues raised in those submissions. These changes include a statement of desired character, additional setback requirements designed to protect the heritage trees, capping the maximum number of dwellings at 300, as well as mandating public access for the roads into the site. These changes seek to implement tighter controls to better manage the future redevelopment of the site and to address any potential impacts arising from the development of the site. I am glad these changes have been implemented to ensure that we have been able to take into account community views.

As there were underground fuel tanks on the site it was deemed necessary to remediate the grounds so that they were suitable for residential development. This has been completed. An assessment was also carried out of the site on which the Downer community centre is located. The reports on both sites have been endorsed by the Environment Protection Agency. The report on consultation prepared for variation 322 responds in full to the issues raised in the submissions and by the EPA.

Under section 73 of the Planning and Development Act I exercised my discretion and did not refer the variation to the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services as I believed there were no outstanding issues. Officers from EPD also met recently with members of the standing committee on the omnibus variation sites and I understand that no issues were raised in regard to the Downer site.

I believe that draft variation 322 will bring a range of benefits to the suburb of Downer as well as to the surrounding area. It will increase the range of housing choice in Downer, providing people, including Downer residents, with housing that is better suited to their needs and that is easier and more efficient to maintain. The proposal will also positively impact upon the Downer local centre, which has been under-utilised for some time now.

More broadly, the redevelopment of this site is consistent with the government's key priority of urban renewal. This can mean better shopping centres, better walking and cycling connections, better community spaces and, through this, stronger communities. Taking advantage of urban renewal opportunities will deliver greater density around those centres of community, making them more livable, more accessible and, importantly, viable.

I am pleased to have tabled the approved variation 322 to the territory plan—Downer urban renewal area.

Papers

Ms Burch presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Architects Act—Architects Board Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-36 (LR, 19 March 2015).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-42 (LR, 19 March 2015).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-40 (LR, 19 March 2015).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2015 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-43 (LR, 19 March 2015).

Dangerous Substances Act—Dangerous Substances (General) Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-10 (LR, 9 April 2015).

Electoral Act—Electoral (Electoral Commissioner) Appointment 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-45 (LR, 30 March 2015).

Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Act 2009 and Financial Management Act—Long Service Leave (Portable Schemes) Governing Board Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-49 (LR, 2 April 2015)

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Moncrieff) Determination 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-48 (LR, 30 March 2015).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2015 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-50 (LR, 9 April 2015).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Amounts payable—Utilities (Network Facilities Tax)) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-46 (LR, 27 March 2015).

Taxation Administration (Special Arrangements for Making Returns) Revocation 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-47 (LR, 2 April 2015).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act—Utilities (Technical Regulation) Listed Dams Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-44 (LR, 9 April 2015).

ACT rural villages

Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Madam Speaker has received letters from Dr Bourke, Mr Coe, Ms Fitzharris, Mr Hanson, Ms Lawder, Mr Smyth

and Mr Wall proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly.

In accordance with standing order 79, Madam Speaker determined that the matter proposed by Mr Wall be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of the ACT's rural villages.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (3.54): I am very happy to bring this matter of public importance to the Assembly today—namely, the importance of rural villages to the ACT. Canberra's rural villages are an integral part of the bush capital, and each one of them highlights the best things about living in Canberra. Some of the villages that are part of Canberra, such as Tharwa and Hall, have been around since long before there was even the notion of a capital city here. The smaller villages of Pialligo and Oaks Estate have now become so much a part of the wider Canberra community and suburbia that we think of them more as suburbs than rural villages. The villages of Stromlo, Pierces Creek and Uriarra have, of course, taken on a whole new identity after the devastation they incurred during the 2003 bushfires, with some areas being rebuilt.

Post-2003 Uriarra village is a completely new iteration of the forestry settlement that was established in the late 1920s. It is once again a thriving community and has recently shown again just how resilient it can be. The recent success in ensuring that the large-scale solar project proposed by the current Labor-Greens government will not be built on their doorstep was a huge win for the rural village, and I am very proud to have stood by them during that fight.

Canberra's rural villages are an important part of Canberra. On this I am sure we can all agree. However, the fact that all members of the Assembly hold our villages in high regard is not necessarily being translated into actions, nor has this regard ensured that our villages grow and flourish. In fact, some of Canberra's rural villages have long been overlooked, and I would go so far as to say that they have been treated with disdain in some instances by the ACT Labor government and their Green colleagues.

Today I would like to put some emphasis on Tharwa village and the litany of insults and injuries residents have endured in recent and not so recent times. Tharwa has a long and proud history. I would like to take the time to read an excerpt from a document sent to me by a long-time Tharwa resident who I believe has spent the best part of his life there—Val Jeffery. He says:

Tharwa is the oldest town in the ACT with St Edmunds church approaching 105 years in 2013, the bridge 117 years old, the community hall 87, and of course the primary school well over 100 years.

The latest shot to destroy this historical community was fired by the ACT Government with the closure of the vital Tharwa Public School.

How much hurt can a community take? On top of all that, the Tharwa village was threatened with legal action over the village water supply that was installed by the community with their own initiative and funding over sixty years ago.

Then the proposed Tennent Dam hangs over the heads of the rural community south of Tharwa. To add more insult to injury, the continuing failure to heed the lessons from the 2003 bush fires places a depressing cloud over the neglected rural ACT.

Tharwa and the ACT rural community as a whole is certainly a community under siege and ignored for twenty years.

The question remains: how much more can this rural community take? Will this gem of the south ever be given a break by this current government, and what does the future hold for it?

Some would say the closure of the Tharwa bridge in 2006 and the protracted decision-making process which was presided over by the Stanhope-led government started a snowball effect of decline for the village. This township was effectively cut off from the rest of the ACT for 18 months before a decision was even made to restore the bridge, leaving residents and visitors high and dry. This, on the back of the closure of the Tharwa primary school, added salt to the wounds. In more recent times, the lack of a decision about water security measures for Tharwa is again putting this iconic rural village on hold.

In another piece of correspondence sent to me by a Tharwa resident entitled, "There is much work to be done", the resident raises issues of the water supply to Tharwa and calls on a pipeline from Banks, taking in Lanyon, Tharwa and a possible extension to Cuppacumbalong. The letter states that the existing declining system is at the end of its life, with access to the river being prohibitive and the equipment reaching the end of its operational time frame.

The resident also raises issues around the proliferation of road signs, which is causing much clutter on what is supposedly the gateway to a national park. He raises issues about antisocial behaviour that is becoming more and more common in the rural village of Tharwa as the urbanised portions of Tuggeranong have reached closer and closer. He raises the issue of the need to upgrade and seal the Adaminaby Road and Smiths Road:

There has been little if any extension of the asphalt and sealed areas of these vital rural roads since the advent of self government. These roads are carrying a massive increase in traffic in that time as visitors to the Snowy region via the Adaminaby Road has proliferated turning this narrow gravel road into a dangerous trip. The Smith's Road now carries extensive traffic to and from the NSW block area as people commute to work and the city. Although the bulk of traffic on these roads is through traffic to and from NSW, the ACT has an urgent obligation to meet its responsibilities to this important rural infrastructure.

Another issue this constituent raises is the need for further upgrades to be carried out to Angle Crossing, over the Murrumbidgee River, noting that little work has been done to upgrade this important river crossing in over 50 years.

There has been much debate in this place about the effectiveness or otherwise of the master planning process. In the case of the promised master plan for Tharwa, we may

well be able to say that it has been shoved well and truly under the carpet by the current government. A quick search of the ACTPLA website unearths that the last mention of the Tharwa master plan and the planning process is from minutes of a planning and development forum from February 2014. Those notes state:

The scoping phase of the Tharwa master plan is being finalised. There is limited land available and there is not a lot of development pressures for the area. Opportunities to be investigated include heritage and tourism, as well the best use of existing resources in the area such as the school building.

The further information that was provided at the conclusion of question time today illustrates that this process has stalled.

My colleague Nicole Lawder put a question on notice about the status of the master plan. I note that Ms Lawder has a continuing interest in Tharwa and Canberra's rural villages, most notably the water security of Tharwa. The answer she received says:

The Tharwa master plan will provide a long-term strategic planning framework for Tharwa that will protect the village's unique character, whilst directing and managing future growth.

An infrastructure study for Tharwa has been initiated by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD). The first component of the infrastructure study is complete. It has assessed the existing service infrastructure and associated capacities, including water supply systems for the Tharwa village.

The second component of the infrastructure study will investigate options and preliminary costings for upgrading the infrastructure supply systems, including water. However, it should be noted that this does not constitute any commitment in relation to infrastructure supply at this stage.

That answer was provided in June 2014. Nearly a year later we are still no further along the road towards a master plan or sorting out the water security issues for Tharwa.

As I touched on briefly before, Minister Gentleman, at the conclusion of question time today, came back to answer questions he was unable to answer during question time. The explanation he gave clearly illustrates that the process of master planning for Tharwa has well and truly been shelved for quite a considerable time.

In March this year residents of Tharwa raised with me a number of concerns about a development application that has been lodged relating to the Cuppacumbalong Homestead. The concerns are valid and again bring Tharwa back into the spotlight. There is a long history of issues relating to development at this site. On 25 March I wrote to Minister Gentleman, who I note is also one of the Labor members for Brindabella responsible for the Tharwa area. I sought a briefing on the status of the development application and any background information relating to the issue. After no response was received by my office, I followed up just last week with a phone call to the minister's office. It is no surprise that here I am again, still waiting to hear from the minister or his office. This is yet another example of the disdain in which Tharwa is held by the current ACT Labor government, and Mr Gentleman is no different.

Today, in response to my questions on the status of the master plans for Calwell and Tharwa, Minister Gentleman said that the government would “consult with the community as soon as we possibly can”. I think it is safe to say that ministers’ ideas of consultation are often a far cry from what the community expects.

It is important to remember that the views of the community go far and beyond the opinions of any one individual and that all members of the Tharwa village and the surrounding areas need to be offered the same opportunity to voice their views on the future of this important historical township.

I do not believe it is all doom and gloom for our villages, and Tharwa in particular has much untapped potential, both as a thriving artisan community and a bustling tourist destination. I and my colleagues believe things can be done to return precincts such as Tharwa back to their former glory. It can be done with a bit of will and proper consultation and far less procrastination than is currently being shown by the ACT government.

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) (4.04): I thank Mr Wall for this matter of public importance on ACT rural villages. The ACT government recognises the importance of our rural villages and has a number of plans and strategies in place to retain the unique nature of these areas for future generations to enjoy.

In 2012 the ACT government released the ACT planning strategy. The planning strategy calls for preparedness to retain the function and identity of the ACT’s rural villages as distinct places rather than a continuation of Canberra’s urban area. While urban growth is focused on existing urban areas, the lifestyle opportunities afforded by these villages will be recognised and supported, providing Canberrans with choice about where they live, be that in an urban or suburban environment, in a rural village, in the bush or on a farm.

Within the ACT, there are many rural villages, as evidence of early pioneer life before the formation of the Federal Capital Territory. These rural villages are important in understanding the history and story of our place. The early villages include Tharwa, Hall and Oaks Estate. Each of these villages represents a different part of the region’s early story.

The village of Tharwa was proclaimed in 1861. The track crossing the Murrumbidgee River at Tharwa was the major route from Queanbeyan to Kiandra during the Kiandra gold rush of 1859 to 1861. The rush was intense, with over 10,000 people making their way to the goldfield in the first year. The track was also essential for the pastoral and farming activities to the west of the river, largely used to transport stock across the river. Camps were often made at Tharwa while this occurred.

When the commonwealth government resumed all rural properties in the southern part of the ACT from the late 1960s, many of the rural families left the district, which had a major impact on Tharwa. Many key elements of the Tharwa village are registered on

the ACT heritage register, including Cuppacumbalong and its cemetery, Tharwa cemetery and Tharwa bridge. Tharwa village has been nominated for the ACT heritage register.

The village of Hall, proclaimed in 1882, represents a small rural service centre associated with the pastoral use of the area before the formation of the federal capital. Hall village has historical associations with the early pioneers of the Ginninderra and Hall district families and continues to provide services to the surrounding rural area within the ACT and New South Wales. Hall village is registered on the ACT heritage register.

The area that is today Oaks Estate originally formed part of the large Duntroon holdings of Robert Campbell. Under Campbell, the stone cottage known as “the Oaks” was constructed. In 1887, the railway reached Queanbeyan and the station was situated close to the Oaks homestead. In 1888, the area was subdivided into allotments to take advantage of the railway line. When the Federal Capital Territory border came into effect in 1911, the border followed the railway line separating Oaks Estate from Queanbeyan. During the early years of construction of the federal capital, Oaks Estate was home to many of the early construction workers. Key elements of the Oaks Estate village are registered on the ACT heritage register, including the Oaks homestead and Robertson House. The village of Oaks Estate has been nominated for the ACT heritage register.

There are also rural villages important to our understanding of the story of the creation of the Federal Capital Territory. These include the forestry settlements of Uriarra, Stromlo, Kowen and Pierces Creek. Pine plantations were established in the ACT in the early 20th century, the earliest being those at Stromlo, dating from 1914 and initiated by Charles Weston. The early plantations were established for aesthetic purposes for the territory; however, they quickly became commercial ventures. Unfortunately, the 2003 bushfires destroyed much of the Stromlo forestry settlement and 16 houses within the Uriarra forestry settlement. These villages are therefore not included on the ACT heritage register.

The ACT government’s desire to retain the function and identity of regional villages and towns as distinct places throughout the ACT rather than a continuation of the Canberra urban area is important. The ACT planning strategy recommends that master plans set out guidelines to retain the character of these villages while allowing for limited growth.

Even prior to the ACT planning strategy, the ACT government recognised the importance of our rural villages. In 2002, the ACT government released the village of Hall master plan. This master plan was an initiative of the Hall community, and they were closely involved with its preparation. The community, at the time, was primarily concerned that suburban development in Gungahlin should recognise Hall as a discrete village and establish principles to protect its distinctive qualities. The village of Hall master plan achieves this by creating a rural buffer to any future development, excluding any additional road connections into the village and providing a set of development control guidelines that respond to the natural and cultural identity of the area.

The planning framework set by the village of Hall master plan ensures that pressure for change does not diminish Hall's social and environmental qualities. Protection of the village character is important not only to Hall residents but to the entire ACT and region community. The master plan will ensure that all Canberrans continue to have the opportunity to enjoy Hall's history and the rural ambience that dates back almost 120 years.

In December of last year, I was delighted to announce the release of the Oaks Estate master plan. Subsequent to that, I announced the release of the draft variation to the territory plan, DV328, for community comment, in January of this year. Three rounds of community engagement were undertaken throughout the master planning process to gather community and stakeholder concerns and priorities for the village. This important interaction helped identify what is important about Oaks Estate and how its character and quality should be conserved and enhanced. The Oaks Estate master plan acknowledges Oaks Estate as a unique semi-rural village. It represents a vision, planning principles and planning strategies that will help preserve and improve the existing village character over time. It sets a strategic direction for the future growth of the village by aiming to identify and balance the land use, economic and social and environmental opportunities and challenges to the benefit of Oaks Estate.

The Oaks Estate master plan's strategies and policies have been incorporated into a draft precinct code for Oaks Estate. The code, included as part of draft variation 328 to the territory plan, has been prepared and was released for public notification for six weeks from 30 January to 16 March this year. We invited the community to have their say and to provide comments.

DV328 aims to protect the existing character of Oaks Estate by making amendments to the precinct map and code to limit the location of light industrial uses, limit building site coverage, introduce setbacks to protect the heritage character of Robertson House, and nominate active frontages and front boundary setbacks in the commercial area to provide interesting ground floor frontages to encourage pedestrian activity and passive surveillance of the street regardless of whether the development is residential or commercial.

Now that the consultation period has closed, the EPD will review 328. Recently, I met with the Oaks Estate Progress Association; together with the Chief Minister and my colleagues, I look forward to continuing to engage the community on issues of most importance to them.

On Tharwa village, the Environment and Planning Directorate is preparing the rural village plan for Tharwa, as I indicated in my answer in question time today. The rural village plan will aim to recognise the significance of the village of Tharwa to the overall planning of Tuggeranong in terms of the tourist and recreational values which are added to the area. The village plan is the most appropriate master planning mechanism for use in the Tharwa context, given the nature and scale of existing development in the village. Rural village plans are a common strategic mechanism used by governments to support smaller townships that face location, infrastructure and investment challenges similar to those Tharwa faces.

The village plan will aim to identify opportunities to enhance the existing open spaces and recreational areas, address infrastructure needs, improve tourism opportunities in the village, support the development of new businesses and community initiatives, and develop appropriate strategies to deliver the plan's goals. The upcoming planning process recognises the important role that local communities and businesses play and will present numerous opportunities for the community to present their ideas for Tharwa's future. The EPD will then develop a draft rural village plan for Tharwa, taking into consideration community and whole-of-government feedback.

In conclusion, the government recognises the importance of our rural villages.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.15): I thank Mr Wall for raising this MPI today and giving us the opportunity to talk about the ACT's villages, particularly our rural villages.

The rural villages of the ACT were in place well before the birth of Canberra in 1913, and as such have a proud and interesting history that all Canberrans should celebrate and value.

The Hall Progress Association is over 110 years old, and its school opened in 1911. Descendants of the early families remain in the district, and many of the original buildings are still standing. While Canberra is such an urban and suburban jurisdiction, our rural villages of Hall, Tharwa, Pialligo, Stromlo, Pierces Creek and Uriarra, and, of course, Oaks Estate, bring a unique perspective on life in the territory, a perspective that at some level we all share and enjoy even if we do not live in those places. Many of us have various memories of going to a range of the villages for different things at different times—some quite recently, some longer ago. They remain very much part of our jurisdiction, part of the territory and part of greater Canberra.

Canberrans very much enjoy the experience of outings to the rural villages and supporting the local community through purchasing local food, produce and arts and crafts. However, the villages of the ACT have experienced enormous pressures over recent decades, including the bushfires of 2003, the drought, school closures, roadworks near Pialligo and the impact of changes to the ACT economy.

That is why, as part of the 2008 parliamentary agreement with the Labor Party, the Greens talked about the continuation of neighbourhood plans. We ultimately agreed with the then planning minister, Minister Barr, that we would like to propose that master plans for Hall and Tharwa be developed alongside the Pialligo master planning process. The reason we stated that at the time, in a letter in November 2009, was that these three villages have tourism and local business aspects of relevance to each other. Developing the plans could enable larger scale planning around village tourism opportunities in the ACT.

The Greens have taken a considerable interest. I know that when Meredith Hunter was the member for Ginninderra she had quite considerable contact with the Hall village residents association at the time. I have been out there on a number of occasions. Recently, in my capacity as the minister for sport, I went out for the launch of a new

shed at the Hall showground. On that day I was with the Hall showjumping group, a very active group. It was great to see so many kids out there that day. That underlines the spirit that we see in some of our rural communities.

Pialligo has a fascinating history, being an early site of Aboriginal campsites from where the Indigenous people hunted on the plains and fished the Molonglo River. From 1825, it became home to white settlers who grazed sheep and cattle and planted vegetable gardens and orchards. Its role as a nursery, garden and farming area is intimately tied to the history of the area. Today, Pialligo supplies our city with fresh produce as well as seedlings and plants which green our city. It has a number of cafes and eateries and is a place where local craft can be found. It has experienced pressure from the airport expansion, with roadworks and the removal of trees which were able to be seen directly from the village. Now the eastern broadacre study again puts uncertainty on this area. Pialligo does now have its master plan, and that provides some greater level of certainty for the area.

I note that Mr Wall focused on Tharwa. Tharwa has a very long history, from well before the history of Canberra. It was proclaimed a township in 1862. It has struggled in recent times. Mr Wall spoke about the issues with the bridge and issues with the school. The famous Cuppacumbalong craft centre and adjacent craft shops have closed, and what was a scenic tourist drive incorporating a number of the area's attractions has waned in popularity. There are many people still passing through the area, and Mr Wall touched a bit on that.

I was interested in the reference to the Tennent dam. Others in this place will perhaps know the history better than I, but I believe that around the time of the 2004 election Mrs Dunne actively advocated for the Tennent dam on behalf of the Liberal Party. It is the reason landholders in the area cannot get long-term certainty on their leases; the Tennent dam is an issue that has prevented them getting those long-term leases. It is important to reflect on the history of these things. I am not quite sure of the point Mr Wall was trying to make. Certainly I would be happy to discuss with him further how we might resolve that issue, because I want to see those rural lessees given greater security of tenure so that they might reasonably invest in their properties and have a degree of certainty. When something like the Tennent dam sits there as a possibility, it is very difficult to grind one's way through the system to overcome those things even if there are no current plans.

Uriarra has received a lot of discussion in this place in recent times, due to the development the residents did not want to see—the solar farm. The debate about the solar farm indicated that the residents of Uriarra highly value the rural nature of their village. That is why many people chose to move out there when the village was rebuilt and, I believe, what they were seeking to protect in their fight to have the solar farm relocated. In my discussions, they indicated that they did not oppose solar and that they were very keen to see more solar in the ACT. But it was about the location. It also showed, and I agree with Mr Wall on this, the powerful sense of community that exists in our rural villages. People banded together very strongly to campaign, and there was a real sense of community as they engaged with the government. I am heading out to Uriarra again this weekend to talk with residents about how we can work to put a buffer zone in place around Uriarra to ensure that their rural amenity can be guaranteed into the future.

Hall is perhaps better known to many more recent residents in Canberra, particularly with the very successful Hall markets and a popular main street for people to visit. Whether it is by car or by bicycle, it is a popular place to visit. The Hall village is now a feature on the Canberra centenary trail—one of its first appearances on a Canberra tourism map. That has been one of the most popular aspects of the centenary trail—that northern section near Hall. Until the centenary trail was opened up, it was an area people had not been able to access for many years. The centenary trail has boosted visitation to Hall. I know that anecdotally: I have talked to quite a few people who have made their way out there to experience that part of the centenary trail.

I am not sure if Oaks Estate quite qualifies as a rural village, in the sense that it is on the fringe of the city proper. We have had discussions about Oaks Estate in this Assembly in recent times. While there was some unfortunate language used in those debates, it was valuable to have that discussion about Oaks Estate. As I said during the last debate, I have some sympathy for the residents. They feel that they have been overlooked. I have met with the progress association and offered some further support and consideration of things that we can try and move forward.

When we are talking about these issues, about these rural villages and, in this case, urban villages, it is important that we understand that they are part of our community, part of the broader fabric of the territory.

When it comes to rural villages, they have great potential to become centres of activity around local food production. Last year, as I have mentioned in this place before, I hosted a roundtable on food security to explore how we can increase the amount of food produced and processed in the local region. A number of policy proposals were presented that would be relevant to rural villages, including specific zoning for agriculture in the territory plan; investigating communal farming opportunities on the urban rural fringe; more intensive agriculture, such as greenhouses, hydroponics and aquaponics; food labelling to promote local produce; and initiatives to utilise organic waste as compost. There is a very bright future with an expansion in regional production, including regional food tourism focused on sustainably produced food and wine. This region is already developing somewhat of a reputation in that space. With my primary industries part of the TAMS portfolio, it is something I am continuing to seek to work on.

In the region we have seen that villages such as Bungendore, Braidwood, Murrumbateman, Goulburn and Yass have done quite well in redefining themselves and putting themselves back on the tourist map. We saw the Collector pumpkin festival on the weekend. These villages are seeking to create a distinct name for themselves in attracting regional revenue. We need to seek to make similar opportunities for our rural villages here in the ACT.

We need a range of initiatives to assist local residents and community groups to lure city dwellers and tourists to our villages. It is important that we do not lose these links to where our European settlement and ongoing Aboriginal custodianship originated.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.25): I am pleased to speak today on the matter of public importance—the importance of our rural villages. I would like to speak about

Tharwa. Tharwa is the oldest settlement in the ACT. It was established in 1862. It currently has a population of around 110 people and it is 32 kilometres from the centre of Canberra. It is on the picturesque Murrumbidgee River and it is only 5.4 kilometres from the nearest neighbouring suburb of Banks. Tharwa includes one of Canberra's oldest businesses—the Tharwa general store, which was established in 1922. It is still the hub of the village.

Other attractions in the area include the Cuppacumbalong cemetery, which serves as a memorial to some of the earlier settlers of the region. It has a federation carpenter gothic-style church called St Edmund's, which was built in 1916 on land donated by the then owner of Cuppacumbalong Station. It is typical of the type of church that you will find all around Australia in that era when communities were looking for a simple but dignified place to hold remembrance services for the sons, husbands and brothers who did not return from World War I.

Tharwa is along Tourist Drive 5. Other attractions in the vicinity, either along Tourist Drive 5 or nearby, include Corin Forest, with the bobsleigh there; the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve; Tidbinbilla Space Tracking Station; and Lambrigg, which was William Farrer's property where Australia's wheat industry germinated. They have an annual plant fair, which is very popular.

There is the Namadgi visitors centre and the entry to the Namadgi national park. There is an outward bound centre located just out of town. Cuppacumbalong, which used to be a conference and wedding venue that many of us would have been to, is now no longer used for that purpose. But there is, in the area, Cuppacumbalong free-range eggs and there is a forge that makes quality knives that win awards at shows around Australia.

In Tharwa itself, there is the Tharwa preschool. It has a fantastic annual fair, where I take my family each year for rides, face painting, petting the farm animals and other entertainment. Just next to the Tharwa general store is the Tharwa hall which, again, holds a bush dance annually. It is not just a fun community event attended by almost all the local community; it raises money for the hall, which is in need of repairs and restoration. Unfortunately, as we have heard, the Tharwa school closed in 2006 after 107 years. The Tharwa bridge closed between 2005 and 2011 for restoration. It was quite a long period of time for the restoration of the bridge. It led to the decline of many of the attractions in the area because visitors had to go a much longer way around.

An issue we have also heard about already is that of the water supply. Tharwa is not on town water, and residents have their own tanks for drinking water and for use in the home. But for their garden and for firefighting they use non-potable water from the large shed located behind the Tharwa general store, just up the hill a bit. It is a large and very ageing tank. From memory, it is about 60 years old. It was installed by Val Jeffery's family about 60 years ago. They fill it with water pumped from the Murrumbidgee River. Of course, we know that Tharwa was one of the first lines of defence against those devastating 2003 bushfires. Val Jeffery himself has been a hero in the community for his very active bushfire fighting work.

The tankers and the bushfire fighting unit there generally rely on the water coming from that old tank. That is the reason it has been a topic of some discussion here in the Assembly over quite a period of time. On 8 August I wrote to Minister Gentleman about ensuring the water supply for Tharwa. We followed that up in question time on 26 November to try to get some further information about ensuring the water supply for Tharwa and about what is happening with the Tharwa master plan.

People live in Tharwa for the rural lifestyle and the community feel. They choose to live out there because they like the feel of the place. I have spent some time out there myself. There are landowners and agricultural properties, rural lessees, many of whom have lived there for generations. You would struggle to shift them off their land. But there are other people who moved there on purpose. They have spoken to me about their troubles with telephone lines, with the internet, with some of the roads, with some local crime. I have spoken with the Tuggeranong police station about the rural patrol going more regularly out to Tharwa.

The villagers do very much feel ignored by this government. They would like to see some progress on the master plan. We have been talking about it for some time. If that ageing water tank had a catastrophic event, the village would be without a lot of water, most importantly for the purpose of bushfire fighting.

It seems quite bizarre that for an important community asset such as bushfire fighting we rely on a privately owned tank to protect the entire community. Tharwa village, if you have not been there, is a beautiful little village. You can pop into the shop and buy a bottle of water if you are on your way out to somewhere else along Tourist Drive 5, but it is certainly worth a visit. It is a lovely little rural village in the ACT.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Mr Adrian Marron

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (4.31): I move:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Today I take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant contribution made by Mr Adrian Marron during his tenure as the Chief Executive Officer of the Canberra Institute of Technology. Mr Marron's contract with CIT has come to an end. Mr Marron was appointed chief executive of CIT in May 2010. He came to CIT from his role as Managing Director, TAFE SA, Adelaide North Institute, where he was responsible for providing effective leadership to the largest of the three institutes that comprise the South Australian TAFE system.

Mr Marron has a sophisticated understanding of the policy agenda at both the commonwealth and state levels and he has an intrinsic understanding of the education

industry and its needs. He is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators, a member of TAFE Directors Australia, and he has contributed to state and national policy debates from within the South Australian and Victorian VET systems, and also from within the ACT.

Among his achievements at CIT are the governance changes, and in particular the establishment of the independent governing board for CIT to enable it to operate more effectively in an increasingly contestable environment. This is set to take effect from July of this year.

Mr Marron has also overseen major internal restructure in preparation for the governance changes, demonstrated a strong commitment to the role of public provider and shown a vision for the future of TAFE that can be articulated on the national stage at a time of great difficulty for many state TAFEs.

He is highly regarded and sought after in the national TAFE sector, presenting numerous conference papers, participating on panels and advocating for TAFE at the national level through conference appearances and recent appearances before House of Representatives and Senate inquiries.

As a leader who was frank, candid and down to earth, CIT staff found him easy to trust and believe. He believed wholeheartedly in the VET system and in CIT's central and essential role in providing education and training to Canberra and across the ACT. He believed CIT to be essential in both skilling people for jobs in the territory and for providing skilled people with pathways for further education.

Despite some turbulent times in the VET environment nationally, he believed in the future of CIT. His vision for CIT included continued investment in modern facilities and a commitment to student experience and placing the individual front and centre of all operations and services.

Mr Adrian Marron leaves CIT with 24 years of experience in the education sector. I know that he holds CIT in the highest regard. I also know that he is highly regarded by the staff of CIT and is seen as an inspirational leader with a clear vision who always has time for everybody.

As we know, CIT is moving towards a period of significant change, particularly with the transition to the new governing board. It is all the better positioned for having had Adrian Marron at the helm for the last five years. I wish Adrian and his family all the best and congratulate him on his significant achievements at CIT. CIT is a far better place for his involvement.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—foster care

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.35): I rise tonight to talk about what the government's new out of home care strategy, a step up for our kids, means for Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Foster care, or out of home care, or any separation of children from their parents, raises great sensitivity in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The federal Labor government's 2008 apology to the stolen generation continues to resonate. The

survivors of the stolen generation are still with us, as are the effects on their families and the community. We vow never again.

I welcome the ACT government's policies that are firmly focused on the rights of the child and the need for a caring and nurturing family environment. Removal of children from their immediate family is a last resort, and it is only done when it serves the best interests of the child. Sadly, as with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in other jurisdictions, Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is over-represented in the number of children in out of home care and in the number of families described as at risk.

Of the 620 children and young people in out of home care in the ACT in February, 26 per cent were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. However, a key feature of current ACT practice in out of home care is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle, which encourages kinship care placements with extended family. This means that over half of Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care are being looked after by their extended family. As of February this year, 166 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were in care, with 90 of those in kinship care—that is, 54 per cent in kinship care with members of the extended family. It also means community services provide support and backup to the extended family and the child or young person is kept within their family and culture.

Before we get to having to consider taking children out of unsuitable environments, the new step up for our kids program will provide more support for at-risk families. This includes intensive prevention and reunification services intended to support high risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to stay together. Practical in-home support to address issues and create a safe environment for the child is a priority. It is backed up by a new panel of cultural advisers from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to provide advice to child protection officers.

A step up for our kids, the new out of home care strategy, is the culmination of work over some years, drawing together the experience of the community sector, affected family members, community services and other directorates in a whole-of-government approach. It brings together expertise across a range of fields. That is because our kids are always worth it. With more casework resources, more individualised approaches and attentiveness to culture, a step up for our kids means we are doing everything we can to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in need.

Celebrate Gungahlin festival

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.38): Last month I was delighted to attend the inaugural Celebrate Gungahlin festival at Gungahlin town park. The festival was a wonderful opportunity for the community to get together and celebrate. Celebrate Gungahlin was very well attended by the community and a wide range of community groups. The enthusiasm of the organisers, community groups and attendees was inspiring. The event was opened by the Chief Minister after the welcome to country by Paul House. Minister Rattenbury, Ms Fitzharris, Senator Seselja and Mr Leigh were also in attendance.

To celebrate the fourth birthday of Alexander Bunyip, the Canberra Children's Choir sang *Happy Birthday*. The Celebrate Gungahlin festival also had the largest selfie—the community selfie. Along with some of my Assembly colleagues, I was pleased to take part in the three-legged race with students from the Gungahlin College. I hope the person I was with was not too traumatised by my lack of coordination in that event!

The community was encouraged to get involved with the photo competition, sponsored by Ms Fitzharris, and the colouring-in competition. Judging of these competitions took place on the day, and I was very impressed with the entries. I also acknowledge the presence and success of My Gungahlin, which was celebrated at the event.

Throughout the day, the community was able to visit the Gungahlin College art exhibition as well as the photo booth. There were demonstrations from local sporting teams and activities for children, including face painting and kite making. Special guest Michael Salmon, the author of *The Monster Who Ate Canberra*, ran cartooning workshops.

I place on record my congratulations and thanks to all those who were involved in organising Celebrate Gungahlin. Communities@Work was the main organiser of the event. I particularly mention the event steering committee: Lynne Harwood, James Milligan, Gai Beecher, Lisa Murphy and Ross McKay. I also, of course, commend the Gungahlin Community Council, which was a partner in the event. I thank Alice Hekimian, the stallholder coordinator, and Karen Coleman, the volunteer coordinator. I also thank the sponsors of Celebrate Gungahlin, including the Morgan's Group, the Ainslie Group, the Economic Development Directorate, SITA, Customised Security Group, Telstra store Gungahlin, *Canberra Weekly*, 104.7, Mix 106.3, and Canberra Towbars and Trailers, who generously donated facilities for the event.

I congratulate all those who helped organise and run Celebrate Gungahlin. It was a wonderful community event which I hope will become a regular community gathering in the Gungahlin calendar.

Celebrate Gungahlin festival

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (4.41): I too rise to speak about the Celebrate Gungahlin festival which was held on 11 April. I was delighted to attend with my family and spend the day there with my Assembly colleagues Mr Coe and Ms Berry, the Chief Minister, who opened the festival, and some of our federal colleagues.

As Mr Coe noted, the festival was run by Communities@Work, My Gungahlin and the Gungahlin Community Council. It was wonderful to have the Chief Minister officially open the event. It was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the community of Gungahlin, with 55 stalls and 15 live acts, including music, dance, art, food and even a doggie fashion show.

There was an incredible atmosphere on the day at Gungahlin's town park, which also helped to celebrate the fourth birthday of Alexander Bunyip. A memorable moment

was the three-legged race, which saw me, Andrew Leigh, Zed Seselja, Alistair Coe and Shane Rattenbury pair up with students from Gungahlin College to race for glory. I am sure Andrew Leigh will be bragging about his win for years to come. I will brag about my own second place, losing to one marathon runner but beating another marathon runner in Shane Rattenbury.

The Celebrate Gungahlin festival also incorporated a photo competition organised by My Gungahlin. The photo competition came about through discussions between My Gungahlin, Communities@Work, the community council and me. When I was elected to this place I realised that I had very bare walls and thought I needed to have a local photograph. I asked if they would mind running the photo competition through the festival, with the winning entry being able to be displayed in my office. Participants were asked to submit a photo that they believed best represented Gungahlin, and it was run entirely through the My Gungahlin website.

There were many amazing entries, notably many depicting Yerrabi Ponds, so obviously Yerrabi Ponds holds a key place in the hearts of many people in the region. The winner, voted by the public, was Lachlan Johnstone's black and white image of the Gungahlin Marketplace at night, which this Friday will be officially hung in my office. I will be delighted to have Communities@Work, My Gungahlin and the Chief Minister to a morning tea.

The festival was also a great day for families, with dance routines, music for the kids and some amazing local businesses showing off their skills. Local restaurant Siren Bar served delicious angus beef sliders, while the Rural Fire Service gave out hundreds of fire safety show bags. In celebration of Alexander Bunyip's fourth birthday, the author of *The Monster That Ate Canberra* was on hand to entertain the younger members of our community. Michael Salmon also ran cartoon workshops inside the library.

Celebrate Gungahlin really was the perfect way to celebrate Canberra's fastest growing region. It was the first time we have had a community festival in Gungahlin, and I am sure it will not be the last. The challenge next year will be making sure that all the events and activities can find a home that is large enough for them.

I would like to congratulate and give enormous thanks to all the staff from Communities@Work, particularly CEO Lynne Harwood, Mark Scarborough from My Gungahlin, and all the members of the Gungahlin Community Council, stallholders, performers and volunteers who contributed to its success.

Housing—Owen flats

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.44): I was pleased to attend a series of barbecues at Owen flats in February, March and April this year. These barbecues were hosted by Northside Community Service and Housing ACT. As I am sure you are all aware, as part of the ACT government's public housing renewal process, residents of Owen flats on Northbourne Avenue will be relocated to other Housing ACT properties. I talked with residents and listened to their questions and concerns. Without fail, each resident I spoke to wanted to know when they would be relocated and where they would be relocated to.

It is troubling that these residents feel they are being kept in the dark about the relocation. They told me they have not been consulted about the relocation. They also acknowledge that they may struggle sometimes to adjust to change, and it is a difficult process to go through. But it is very concerning, given that we have spoken in this place about the consultation that is taking place, that residents feel they have not been consulted. For example, Minister Berry in February this year referred to “the very extensive program of consultation rolling out for ACT housing tenants along Northbourne Avenue around the government’s plans for redevelopment and what it means for the tenants who live there”.

It reminded me of an old saying I learnt when I was quite young: tell them, tell them and tell them. You cannot presume that if you tell someone something once, they have taken it in. For people who may struggle to adjust to change and to adapt, telling them several times and in different ways is a very important part of the process.

I have really enjoyed chatting to the residents and sharing food with them. Many of them have displayed fantastic cooking skills that I have been the beneficiary of. I thank the residents of Owen flats for having me at their barbecues—in particular, Brendan, for inviting me, and all the other residents of Owen flats for their hospitality, including Maree, Laurel, Nathalie, Nick, Makin and many others. I look forward to speaking further with them over the coming months and wish them all the very best for their move and for the future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.47 pm.