



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

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Wednesday, 6 May 2015

MADAM SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) took the chair at 10 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Housing—public

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.00): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the important role that public housing plays in the lives of disadvantaged Canberrans;
- (b) that public housing in the ACT is allocated to people with complex and urgent need for housing assistance; and
- (c) that the ACT Government has committed to a program of public housing renewal over the next five years, which will replace older public housing with more efficient housing that better meets their needs;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the Government's policy for public housing to be, as much as possible, distributed across the city;
 - (b) that this policy allows public housing tenants to be integrated into communities, for children to attend schools across Canberra, and for tenants of all ages to have access to services, communities and support structures that meet their individual needs;
 - (c) that public housing tenants are supported with community based services to meet their individual needs and to ensure that they are able to sustain their tenancies; and
 - (d) that the Government works with local communities to ensure that the design and location of the housing is appropriate to individual locations;
- (3) calls on the Assembly to affirm its support for public housing being integrated across Canberra's suburbs; and
- (4) calls on the Government to update the Assembly by no later than the last sitting day in 2015 on the replacement housing for tenants being relocated as part of the public housing renewal program.

I am pleased today to move this motion on public housing. This is a very important issue. The ACT government is committed to providing safe, affordable and appropriate housing that supports tenants and applicants in a sustainable way. And we can be proud that Canberra does more than most Australian communities to support

people through the provision of public and community housing. This is not by accident. It is because successive governments in the ACT have known a fundamental truth about the people who live in our city. We are a community who care about the vulnerable, who include the vulnerable as valuable and contributing members to our social fabric and who expect our political leaders to put those values into action.

We provide housing for people most in need. Our housing plays a very important role in providing accommodation to the lowest 20 per cent of household incomes in the ACT. We also support tenants who have additional needs, and in each case our aim is to support people to sustain their tenancies. This is at the core of who we are as a city and a society. We recognise that vulnerable people contribute to the fabric of our society, and we are a city and a society that value that contribution.

I think most Canberrans would agree that we can measure the strength and success of our community by how we provide opportunities for our most vulnerable members. In fact, I do not think there is any higher test. And one of the ways we can support the most vulnerable people in our community is through providing good-quality housing. Unfortunately, public housing sometimes gets a bad name. People sometimes think it means higher crime rates, gangs and ghettos. This is incorrect and unfair.

Have a think for a moment about the people who might need the support that public housing provides. It might be a mother with her two young children who are affected by family violence and have nowhere else to go. It might be an elderly pensioner who has lived in the community all their life. It might be a young man with a disability who wants to live independently for the first time. It might be a family of refugees who have fled violence and instability and who are establishing a new family life in this great city. The profile of people in public housing is diverse.

Public housing is a fundamentally important part of our community. It provides stability and certainty to many members of the community when they need it most. It gives members of our community an opportunity to get on their feet. It may help them to get out of the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage and become contributing members of our society.

But public housing is not something we can set and forget. Canberra's long history of public housing comes with a legacy: the oldest public housing portfolio in Australia. Much of our public housing was built quickly, to the standards of a different time, and it has reached the end of its life. I do not think anyone driving down Northbourne Avenue can look at our public housing stock there and say, "That is the standard I want to measure my community's success by." We can do better, and so we must do better.

Quite simply, much of our public housing stock does not match the needs of public housing tenants and applicants on the waiting list. These needs include improved security for women escaping domestic violence, the capacity for ageing in place for older tenants and adaptable and livable design for tenants with a disability. People living with a disability make up almost 40 per cent of our public housing tenants.

Bedsits and single-bedroom apartments may have worked well as temporary accommodation for freshly arrived public servants, but that was 50 years ago. That accommodation simply does not work for people with a disability, for ageing tenants or for anyone with a child. Renewing our portfolio means we will be better able to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our community, break down aggregations of disadvantage and better integrate public housing and our public housing tenants into our community.

So the time to renew Canberra's public housing has come. I am very proud to be part of a government that is taking the lead when it comes to public housing renewal, proud to be part of a government that recognises the importance of providing good-quality housing to those who need it most, that approaches this significant task with a very clear head, and recognises that it is in the interests of our community, and in particular public housing tenants, that we better meet their needs. And the ministerial team is committed to working with tenants to deliver this result.

In fact, this will be the largest renewal of public housing in the history of self-government, replacing stock which has reached the end of its useful life with modern homes far more suited to the needs of our tenants. This five-year plan will drive urban renewal across our city and improve the range of housing choices available to ACT residents. It will also allow us to move away from multi-unit complexes of public housing, which can concentrate disadvantage, and develop homes that are more affordable and better meet the needs of our tenants. Public housing is located throughout Canberra, in most suburbs, and will be further incorporated in our newer suburbs.

Public housing is an important strategy to alleviate poverty and social disadvantage in our community. And as a community we have made a deliberate decision to make sure we do not have big concentrations of disadvantage. We know that outcomes for public housing tenants are best when we integrate public housing into our community. It means better outcomes for our community as a whole and certainly better outcomes for our public housing tenants. Everyone can make a positive contribution to our community if we help provide the personal circumstances and living arrangements to allow that to happen.

Our public housing renewal program will deliver housing that suits the needs of our tenants. It will support our ageing tenants, our tenants with disabilities and our tenants with children. We value the benefits of having mixed communities, people living side by side, educated in the same schools and mixing together, modelling behaviour that prioritises community, work and family.

“Salt and peppering”, as it is known, is part of the public housing asset management strategy. This is not a formula; it is an intention to provide public housing in as many parts of the community as possible. Salt and peppering of social housing is important to achieve fairness in our community. It is about providing people with equal opportunities, whether they be renters or property owners. And it means public housing in Canberra is becoming indistinguishable from other forms of housing. It avoids the negative elements of concentrations of disadvantage and social stigmatisation that obviously disadvantaged areas can have.

From a social policy perspective, salt and peppering has been the backbone of addressing social outcomes and addressing disadvantage. It has helped us to encourage people to have aspirations and become home owners for the first time. It has helped people to have the stability they need to move on and move forward. Salt and peppering has been built into the fabric of our community. It means better integration with public transport and community facilities.

Currently, our biggest stocks of public housing are in the inner north and inner south, which reflects the development that took place 50 or 60 years ago. Over the decades since, there has been an approach to get public housing into the other regions of the city, including Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Woden and Weston Creek, and Gungahlin, to ensure public housing is integrated into our newer suburbs. This is a good thing. As part of the government's public housing renewal program, there is an opportunity to further invest in public housing and give further effect to salt and peppering. It is still important to have properties in the inner south and inner north and along major transport corridors, but salt and peppering will help avoid larger concentrations of disadvantage, which is in everyone's interests.

Through our public housing renewal program, the ACT government will build over 1,000 modern homes. One part of this plan is for 14 new dwellings in the suburb of Nicholls. The new housing development in Nicholls will be for supportive housing for ageing tenants and for those with a disability. The site in Nicholls is well suited for supportive housing as it is close to the Nicholls shops and the bus service on Kelleway Avenue. The housing will be designed and built to meet the needs of the tenants—I reiterate, for those that are ageing tenants or those with a disability—and in a way that helps the government deliver the services they need, services like meals on wheels and support from community health and social services.

The public housing renewal task force have worked hard to keep the community informed about this development and have reached out to make sure every resident in the community has the information they need. They have consulted residents via a letter on 4 February 2015, another letter to the Gungahlin Community Council on 4 February 2015, a presentation to the Gungahlin Community Council on 11 March and a public meeting just this week, on 4 May, at the Gungahlin library. I am told that the Planning and Land Authority has extended the current period of a development application to the end of this week to make sure any member of the Nicholls community who would like to have a say on this development has the chance to contribute.

Unfortunately, it does appear that some members of the Nicholls community have somehow found some incorrect definitions of supportive housing. Let me reassure the Nicholls community that this proposed development is for supportive housing for elderly people and for people with a disability. This type of housing provides enormous benefit to the people who live in it. Of course, the government will continue to work with local communities to ensure that the design and location of housing are appropriate to individual locations, as my motion notes. That consultation must be based on facts. If the facts are not known, I and ACT ministers will provide those facts. Consultation has been important, and the Nicholls development has

already been adjusted in response to some of the community feedback from more than 80 submissions. For instance, there will now be fewer homes, increased setbacks and more landscaping.

Indeed, there are multiple public housing developments located on sites just like this, near schools and shops, right across our city. Many are well established; some are new. For example, there is a supportive housing complex being built right next door to my children's school in Harrison. This supportive housing complex is being built by the ACT government in conjunction with Project Independence, an organisation which supports people with a disability to live alone. That development went through detailed community consultation with schools and the general community and then through the full planning process, and construction is underway.

To my knowledge there was no opposition. Indeed, I have direct experience of its being fully supported by the local community. I am somewhat concerned that the Nicholls proposal appears to be so strongly opposed. If that opposition is based on lack of information then I know the ACT government will do what it can to make sure the information is fully available.

Further, across the road from my children's school is another community housing complex that was built at the same time as the school, a complex with a vibrant and welcoming community that welcomes the local community to walk in their grounds and experience the important heritage track that runs alongside it.

I am sure that, just like the rest of the Canberra community, the residents of Nicholls want to measure the success of their community by the compassion and support they provide for some of our most vulnerable members. I am also sure that we should measure our own actions as community leaders against that same standard, just as our community expects.

Integrating public housing is a critical element of achieving fairness in our community but it must be done in a way that is consultative and in the best interests of tenants and the community. That is why I know the government will continue to work with local communities to ensure that the design and location of our renewed housing are appropriate to individual locations.

Public housing renewal is vital to our overall plan for urban renewal and will take place over the next five years. Owen flats will be the first public housing site to be renewed, and the ACT government are talking closely with tenants there and working one on one with residents to make sure we know exactly what their needs are. I know tenants will want to know where they will be relocated, and that is why it is important that the government provide an update no later than the last sitting day in 2015 on the replacement housing for tenants being relocated as part of the public housing renewal program.

This government knows that public housing renewal is not just about building buildings. We know that it is about building communities, and that is exactly what we are doing and will continue to do. I commend the motion.

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) (10.14): I thank Ms Fitzharris for bringing this motion forward today. It is good to have a discussion on public housing, and it is timely to have that conversation here today.

Canberra has a proud tradition of providing public housing, one which has always enjoyed a fair degree of bipartisan support. This motion provides the opportunity for all parties to affirm their support for the fundamental principles of public housing in our city—in its distribution across Canberra, in the way we prioritise those with the highest need, in the inclusion of public housing tenants as important members of our suburbs and communities and as people who contribute and belong. While we welcome constructive debate on the different elements of housing policy, I do hope we can maintain general consensus on these principles.

I spent a good part of my childhood in public housing. Most of my neighbours and friends were in public housing; many still are. Growing up, this helped to shape my belief in its value both for tenants and for communities. It played a key role in Canberra's early development and remains an important influence in shaping the city we know today.

Public housing continues to play a vital role in providing accommodation to people on low incomes and supporting those who have the greatest need. It provides a solid foundation for social and economic participation. It remains a crucial element of the social safety net for those who find themselves isolated or marginalised. It is a sign of a prosperous and generous society which believes in supporting those who might be less fortunate. And it is a fundamental part of our government's commitment to fairness, inclusion and equality.

Looking into the future, the renewal program for public housing in the ACT will be a key part of our investment in delivering on these principles. This new housing will be modern, well designed, efficient and better suited to tenants' needs. All properties will incorporate energy and water efficient features, appliances and technology. The aim is to achieve at least gold standard livable design or C-class building standards for housing for people with a disability.

The public housing renewal program is ambitious. It is a significant increase in public housing replacement, initially replacing 1,288 properties. Given the size of the program, many residents will not be immediately affected and it may be a number of years before they need to move.

Yesterday Ms Lawder spoke in the adjournment debate about the need to keep consulting and having conversations with tenants throughout this process. I agree, and I have made this a priority for the way we manage it. She spoke of these tenants as people, as Canberrans, as equals—and this is something that, as MLAs, we always need to do, even when it might cast them in a different light. Condoning unfair and untrue generalisations around antisocial behaviour or danger when it comes to public housing tenants is something we all need to avoid. And it is especially unfair when we are talking about our most senior citizens or those living with disabilities.

Our renewal program seeks to overhaul our ageing public housing stock and replace it with new, fit-for-purpose housing which continues to spread public housing around the ACT through the well-understood salt and pepper approach. By doing so we will be reducing concentrations of disadvantage in the larger multi-unit complexes and contributing to urban renewal in our city. Salt and peppering is not new. It has served Canberra well and will continue to do so. It has been a fundamental component of the public housing asset management strategy.

Our biggest stocks of public housing are in the inner north and inner south, which reflects the development that took place 50 to 60 years ago. Over the decades since, we have worked to include public housing in Belconnen, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin to ensure public housing is integrated into our newer suburbs. We do not have anything like the concentrations of public housing seen in cities like Melbourne and Sydney, where thousands of tenants are living in large housing sites. But, even from our better starting point, we are working through the public housing renewal program to achieve a more even distribution through our suburbs.

Housing ACT will therefore retain a significant proportion of inner city properties, ensuring public housing tenants have access to the amenity of the inner city. However, the overall proportion of public housing in the region will be much more aligned to the geographic distribution of housing across Canberra. Typically, new developments will range from 14 to 25 dwellings. This will be vital to ensuring we do not return to the days of high density multi-unit properties. The public housing program will also enable an increased public housing presence in growth areas such as Gungahlin, west Belconnen and Molonglo, ensuring the continuation of a salt and pepper approach throughout the city as our city grows further.

As we work to incorporate public housing into new suburbs and redevelop housing in existing suburbs, we are seeking to work with the community to achieve the best outcomes in the design of replacement stock. The government is committed to delivering appropriate housing that fits in with individual locations. Indeed, one of the core principles of the integration of public housing throughout Canberra's suburbs is that public housing should be indistinguishable from the surrounding housing stock.

I am confident that through the renewal process a robust consultation with local communities will ensure the best design for each area. I note, for example, that consultation with communities about the site selection for replacement public housing occurs both before and after a development application is submitted and that some important community stakeholders have welcomed the early engagement with local communities.

The integration of public housing throughout Canberra's suburbs is not just about numbers of stock and where it is located. It is about the benefits of having mixed communities—people living side by side, going to the same doctors and the shops, sending their children to the same schools. Children from some of the wealthiest and poorest families in Canberra attend school together in suburbs like Red Hill. Let us remember that housing tenure does not matter to children playing together in the playground.

We also support public housing tenants who have additional needs. In every case our aim is to support people to sustain their tenancies and to alleviate disadvantage in our community. With these and other complex support needs in mind, public housing tenants have access to mainstream community services and programs as well as the support of housing managers.

Housing ACT funds a range of programs that support public housing tenants. These programs support tenants to be a part of the community as well as providing early responses prior to support needs becoming critical. This recognises that the provision of safe, affordable housing alone is not sufficient for everyone. Some key examples of these support programs include the supportive tenancy service run by Woden Community Service. This assists their tenants to retain their accommodation under both private and public leases. Winnunga Nimmityjah has two programs providing supports specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public housing tenants. This includes assistance with maintenance issues in their homes and the facilitation of linkages with legal and mainstream supports to help sustain their tenancy.

The continuation of public housing throughout our city into the future is key to maintaining the strong social fabric of our community, and this motion affirms our collective support. Salt and peppering has been a critical element of achieving fairness in our community. It has ensured that individuals and families are not excluded from the opportunities of our prosperous city or from access to key services, transport and social infrastructure. Through salt and peppering we have largely avoided the negative elements of concentrations of disadvantage and social stigmatisation that obviously disadvantaged areas can have. After all, we often pride ourselves on our egalitarianism and our freedom from the hang-ups of class which have always held back other cities and countries.

I commend the motion and again thank Ms Fitzharris for bringing it to the Assembly today. I look forward to updating the Assembly on the government's work in public housing into the future.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.24): I would like to take the opportunity to speak in response to Ms Fitzharris's motion on public housing. I am very pleased that she has raised this topic. I share her interest in this matter, and Ms Berry's also. One of the points in the motion is that public housing in the ACT is allocated to people with complex and urgent need for housing assistance, and that is a basic tenet of public housing.

To be eligible for the priority housing needs category, an applicant must demonstrate exceptional, urgent and critical need that cannot be resolved by any reasonable means other than the early provision of social housing. Unfortunately, in the ACT, as at 4 May this year, the average waiting time for the priority housing list was 244 days. This means that a person on the priority housing list who has complex and urgent need for housing assistance must wait for eight months on average before they are offered a public housing property. For some people it is shorter than that, but for other people it is much longer. Nevertheless, as an average, eight months is a very long time without a stable and secure place to live for a person with complex and urgent need for housing.

Data published in the March 2015 First Point report shows that as at the end of March this year 705 people had contacted First Point for homelessness accommodation. This is substantially higher than the 12-month average of 632 people. In March this year First Point placed only six per cent of people waiting for homelessness accommodation—only six per cent. So not only do we have incredibly long waiting times for people with complex and urgent need for housing but we have the gateway service, First Point, not being able to get people into homelessness services. So we do need a plan from the government to manage and fix this.

Ms Fitzharris also noted in her motion that this policy allows public housing tenants to be integrated into communities, for children to attend schools across Canberra and for tenants of all ages to have access to services, communities and support structures that meet their individual needs. Once again, I absolutely agree with that sentiment. However, the ACT government's own transport for Canberra 2012-31 plan states:

For some areas on the fringes of suburbs (e.g. ... Chisholm) the circuitous street layout and hilly topography make it difficult to provide public transport within a reasonable walking distance of some households, and make the car an easier travel option. Housing near transport corridors such as Northbourne Avenue have access to high frequency public transport.

My question to the government on that is: how will relocating public housing tenants away from areas of high frequency public transport to areas where it may be more difficult to provide public transport within a reasonable walking distance of home assist tenants to access services, communities and support structures? How will a person living on a low income be able to access services, communities and support structures if they live in a suburb that has limited public transport, especially if they do not drive a car?

Many Canberrans face limited access to the ACT private rental market. This reinforces our need for an effective and efficient public housing system that enables public housing tenants to easily access services, communities and support structures that meet their individual needs.

Ms Fitzharris mentioned the public meeting at the Gungahlin library this week about the ACT government's proposed supportive housing development on Kelleway Avenue in Nicholls. I would like to make a few points about that. Firstly, if people have misunderstood what supportive housing may be, I would see that as a failure on the part of the government and the department to adequately inform people. It is not those people's fault that they have not been informed what the housing complex will encompass.

The signage there, as I understand it, has indicated that a community facility will be built on the site. Madam Speaker, you and I might understand that that includes a supportive housing complex, but many other people in the community may have been under the impression that a community facility to be built might be a sporting complex or something that was of benefit to the entire community. What we as bureaucrats, if you like, understand by the terminology may not be what is perceived to be the case in the general community. Once again I believe that the onus is on the government to adequately inform people about that.

With respect to the supportive housing project in Nicholls, I heard from someone who was at that meeting that there were maybe 150 people there. When asked by the directorate representative who supported the proposal, not a single hand was raised. When he asked who was against the proposal, everyone present raised their hand. I also understand from that meeting that a number of issues with the development application were identified, not least of which was a problem with the notification signage. If this government cannot even get a sign correct, what hope do we have for the rest of this project?

Ms Fitzharris noted in her motion that the government's policy for public housing is for it to be, as much as possible, distributed across the city. As we know, the government is moving tenants out of public housing properties, including the ABC flats, the Northbourne flats and the Northbourne housing precinct in Dickson and Lyneham. Quite an extensive list of other public housing properties has been selected to be sold off, as part of the government's public housing renewal program.

Let me be quite clear that we support salt and peppering but the location must be suitable, the local community must be respected, they must be consulted and they must be provided with proper information. When you work well with the local community, the outcomes are better for everyone concerned. It seems that this government has to be told that over and over again—Uriarra solar farm being another example of a lack of consultation.

An example where it has worked well is the Common Ground projects, not just here in Canberra but around Australia and indeed around the world, where the local community has quite embraced the project. That is a good outcome for everyone.

Public housing has historically played, and continues to play, an important role in Canberra. It is important for disadvantaged Canberrans. I would like to thank Ms Fitzharris for bringing forward her motion today. I support the motion and I look forward to hearing the government's update to the Assembly later this year.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.31): I thank Ms Fitzharris for raising this motion today, because the provision of quality public housing for some of the most vulnerable members in our society has been at the core of what it is to be a Canberran since our city's beginning. Our community demands that we turn these community values into action and that we, as community leaders, make sure our public housing tenants feel welcomed and included in all places and all communities in our city.

Canberra is an inclusive community and public housing plays a key role for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Canberrans. We have a proud history of public housing, right from the early days of the city, when housing was built for newly arrived workers beginning to build the national capital. Since self-government successive ACT governments have continued to prioritise public housing for Canberra. However, as a result of this longstanding commitment, Canberra has the oldest public housing portfolio in the country, with an average age of dwellings of more than 30 years.

I have previously spoken about the fact that much of this housing, particularly along Northbourne Avenue, is no longer adequate for its original purpose. The buildings do not suit families, they do not support ageing in place and they do not provide disability access. The buildings are expensive to maintain and live in, and it simply would not be viable to bring them up to contemporary building or energy efficiency standards. As a result, the government has committed to the most significant public housing renewal program in the history of self-government—to build new, modern accommodation to replace just under 1,300 of these properties which have reached the end of their useful life.

The new public housing that will be constructed will be contemporary, with better design and construction than the existing dwellings. We will require a minimum of six-star energy efficiency ratings and designs that take advantage of natural sunlight and ventilation. These design features will help reduce the utility and living costs for tenants whilst at the same time significantly improving quality of life. The new homes the public housing renewal program will deliver will have private open space or balconies and a strong focus on security and privacy. Some of the new homes are being specifically designed to suit families.

We also recognise, though, that many of our public housing tenants are getting older and are living with a disability. We need to make sure that the new public housing we construct will support these tenants and their needs. Livable and adaptable housing designs will make sure the new homes we build are accessible for people of all ages and all abilities.

I think Canberrans take it as a matter of pride that our public housing tenants should be welcomed into all communities and all suburbs and that, indeed, almost all Canberra suburbs are home to public housing tenants. Our renewal program will continue this policy of distributing public housing across Canberra. We know building large complexes of public housing creates risks associated with concentrations of disadvantage. Integrating public housing across Canberra's suburbs helps public housing tenants to be part of the wider community and to contribute to the life of that community.

Dispersing public housing amongst all communities gives children the chance to attend schools all over the city and gives all tenants the ability to access the services that meet their needs. I think every Canberran is proud that we are an inclusive city that values the contribution that every citizen makes.

I have previously spoken about the opportunities the public housing renewal program offers, giving us the chance to renew our urban areas and the gateway to our city. Through this opportunity we can demonstrate that our city is changing and evolving with the times, that we are confident, bold and ready for our second century.

But it is not just about the design of our city; urban renewal allows us to improve the range of housing choices on offer in Canberra and supports the ongoing viability of our major transport corridors. It is also about the way we treat our citizens, most particularly our most vulnerable residents. The public housing renewal program will improve the outcomes for public housing tenants by lifting the quality of the overall public housing portfolio.

The renewal program will mean a move to a new home for some public housing tenants. We will work with these tenants, give them the support they need, but also make sure we find places and communities that work best for these tenants. We are working with our tenants to identify their needs, to make sure we meet those needs as best as we can.

The government is committed to working with local communities where new public housing is proposed to ensure that the design and location of homes is appropriate for the local area and the community. In determining where new public housing can be located, we need to take into consideration access to shopping centres, local shopping services and transport, including public transport routes. We need to consider the impact of any new development on an existing area through the necessary traffic and planning studies. We will work with the community to ensure we take on board concerns about planning and design.

This process is already well underway, with a series of preliminary initial meetings with community councils and the offer of further consultation meetings with the public if required or requested. Community consultation is critical to making sure we develop new housing that fits within existing communities. Local residents know their communities best, and we certainly rely on local knowledge to make sure our new housing builds on existing communities.

The government are committed to this program of renewal. We are committed to providing modern accommodation that is distributed across Canberra so that our public housing tenants are able to access services and be part of an inclusive and supportive community. These are values we hold close, values we support and values we will enact as a government. I am very pleased that the largest renewal of public housing in the history of self-government is underway and that we will continue to support this program through the forthcoming territory budget. I commend Ms Fitzharris for her motion today.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.39): I am happy to support this motion today and talk to the vital importance of public housing being integrated across all of Canberra's suburbs. The reasons for this are manifold, well documented, evidence based and essential to the continued policy of this government of a socially and culturally inclusive Canberra that celebrates its diversity. As we all know, Canberra was in part built on a public housing foundation. The workers cottages, the public servants quarters spread out across the suburbs and town centres are all part of the growth and identity of our city. Fast forward to now, past our 100th year, and we should not be caught forgetting that tradition.

As we embark on the most ambitious public housing renewal project we have ever seen, it is important we ensure we are not forgetting that the success of our public housing strategy has been built on the salt and pepper approach. This salt and pepper approach sees units and houses under Housing ACT being built and maintained right across our city. It would be fair to say that, in recent times as we have expanded into new areas and intensified development in existing areas, we have fallen a little short of that ideal mix of social, affordable public and private housing.

It is fascinating to look at the detail of where our public housing stock is. As Ms Fitzharris touched on in her earlier comments, we see very significant levels in some of the older suburbs. Ainslie has the highest number of public housing properties, but through large parts of the inner north and inner south we see very high numbers. What is interesting to see is that some of our newer suburbs have little if no public housing.

In some ways we have some work to do to maintain that salt and pepper approach. This means the government needs to be looking at where it will build new housing. This was certainly something I was considering in my time as housing minister, and that is why I am so pleased to see this issue raised again in the Assembly, to reaffirm our commitment to this really important idea that we want our social and public housing spread throughout the city and not concentrated in particular areas.

The reasons for this approach should be clear, but let me touch on a few of the more obvious ones that are worth reinforcing in the context of this discussion. Public housing tenants are our neighbours; they are our friends and families and they have links to their communities the way everyone else does. They live, work and play in Canberra, just like everyone else, and they offer the same contributions to the overall life of the city, just like everyone else. By supporting social and public housing across the territory we recognise these facts and acknowledge that someone's relative need for housing support—a basic human right—should not preclude them from enjoying the same facilities and amenities as everybody else.

We do not want to corral people, based on their vulnerabilities, nor exclude them from active engagement with the life of the city because of their income. I believe the policy works well when properly implemented. By reducing concentrations of disadvantage, we break down negative stereotypes and enhance opportunities for social inclusion. We highlight our egalitarian society and reduce isolation.

There are many practical reasons as well. By providing a broad range of both types of housing and locations, we respect that individuals have individual needs and that these needs may change over time. Tenants need to be close to work or training, schools and shops and have access to public transport and public services—all the things anyone looks at when seeking new accommodation. Some of our tenants require more support than others in relation to accessing these opportunities. By limiting the areas available to those tenants, we can actively compound and increase existing disadvantage in a range of ways.

I need to acknowledge that there are, indeed, areas where the positives of this approach have perhaps failed. I think the fact that this government is working hard to change its approach reflects that. I am talking to some clear examples of concentration we are all aware of—the Allawah, Bega and Currong apartment complexes, the Northbourne corridor and the Stuart flats, to name a few.

These buildings are ageing infrastructure no longer suitable for many of our current client needs, both physically and socially. The built form is poorly adaptable to the extremes of hot and cold we experience in the ACT, costly to run and maintain, and represents an outdated and, frankly, ineffective response to the complex issues of homelessness and accommodation needs.

As we begin the large task of working with existing tenants to identify areas of priority and suitability for transfer of their leases, we also need to redefine the best-practice approach to building new accommodation. We can now build affordable, more sustainable six-star energy efficient houses that will reduce the burden on the tenants' living expenses, improve their health and comfort, and reduce the impacts on the environment.

We will also build smaller clusters, more manageable and easier to maintain units. There are some fantastic examples of this already in the inner north—clusters of apartments, townhouses, and other forms with between 12 to 20 units. These new units are nestled in amongst private developments, and walking by you would never be able to spot the difference. This new approach has seen a reduction in antisocial behaviour, provided greater dignity to Housing ACT tenants and reduced some of the negative stereotypes sometimes unfortunately attributed to them.

Tens of thousands of Canberrans live in public housing, and the vast majority of them participate in the quiet enjoyment of their rental properties, as we all do. Of course, there are also some tenants who may present with more complex needs that require increased support to maintain their tenancies. But that, to me, is a sign that we are providing the right kinds of support at the right time, and secure housing is such an essential part of that support.

As we redevelop housing sites around Canberra to maintain our salt and pepper approach and modernise our housing stock, I ask Canberrans to pause and think about the purpose of providing accommodation to those in need. We need to challenge the occasional negative stereotype and look instead to helping those who are doing it tough. There will be housing going into areas that perhaps have not had public housing or, more likely, into areas that do not have public housing that neighbours have had an idea of because there has been no reason to think of the tenants as anything other than just neighbours.

I also ask that those local communities consider these new developments with respect and compassion. With the appropriate community consultation and the thorough planning mechanisms available to government, I urge people to engage with the process and look to the broader social, economic and environmental benefits these new models will bring to the city. I believe and the Greens believe our city is stronger and better for the spread of public housing. That is why I am pleased to support the motion put forward by Ms Fitzharris today.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.47), in reply: I thank my colleagues across the Assembly for their support of this important motion. I would like to summarise some of the discussion that we have had today, which goes to clear support for public housing in our community from all parties represented in this Assembly.

My colleagues Minister Berry and the Chief Minister stated that we need to see a general consensus on this issue—that we need to see general consensus on public housing continuing to be spread across our community, for a number of different reasons. Today we have had a strong indication of that support.

It was acknowledged that public housing renewal will support those on the lowest incomes and those in greatest need. Support of public housing also shows we are a generous and prosperous community in the ACT—I believe leading the nation in that regard. As many members noted, consultation on how and when we renew our public housing stock is important, both with tenants currently tenanted in ACT Housing properties and with the broader community.

The overarching values and aims in this process are to reduce concentrations of disadvantage and not return to the days of high density dwellings. We must find for our public housing tenants appropriate housing for individual locations.

As all members noted, there are wonderful benefits to come from mixed communities. As Ms Berry noted in particular, housing tenure does not matter to children playing in a playground. We all know that often the richness of our community relationships comes with knowing and learning from people different to ourselves. Public housing tenants, as acknowledged, should have equal access to services, transport and infrastructure. All of these aims and objectives come together to provide housing for those most in need and to continue to build and strengthen our social fabric.

The Chief Minister acknowledged that the public housing renewal program is also about improving the quality of the public housing stock. It will be better designed and more efficient. Also, as Mr Rattenbury noted, houses will be nicer places to live in and cheaper to heat and cool in our winters and summers. Importantly, a number of members recognised how many public housing tenants are older and/or have a disability. Our housing stock must meet their needs.

I thank Ms Lawder, and note her strong commitment to housing over a number of years, and thank the Canberra Liberals for their support of this motion. Ms Lawder's points about the waiting list for people who are in need of public housing highlight the need to renew our current stock, increase supply and provide housing that better suits the needs of tenants. I hope that the Canberra Liberals' recognition of and support for this important principle continues as the program is delivered.

This government's values and objectives are clear in this program of public housing renewal. Our values are to support people to contribute and participate; our objectives are to renew the public housing stock over the next five years. The fact that some areas across Canberra may not be as accessible by public transport reinforces the need to ensure that future public housing meets the needs of tenants as well as the broader community.

I take Ms Lawder's point about the need to be clearer about the Nicholls development and what supportive accommodation, supportive housing in the case of this development, looks like. This government and I will do what we can to ensure that this information is fully available to residents. For the people who have contacted me about this development, I have been very open about answering their questions. I have been very clear that in this case supportive housing means housing for elderly people and people with a disability. That is clear in the wording from the letters sent to Nicholls residents and to the Gungahlin Community Council.

I hope that the Canberra Liberals work with us and with the Nicholls community to reassure people about the definition of supportive housing which is available to them. I am sure Ms Berry and the Chief Minister will be happy to provide that definition so that there is not further concern raised in the community on information which has somehow been misrepresented. I am sure that the government can make that offer to the Canberra Liberals today; I really hope that they can work with us on that. That is both for the community as a whole and, as this development progresses, for the potential future residents of that community: they want to know that they are moving into a community that accepts them and welcomes them.

Thank you also to Mr Rattenbury for his support. I note his recognition of the diversity of public housing in Canberra and also its rich history in contributing to our society. I note his comments about wanting to ensure that public housing continues to be built across the city. I know that he has been a strong supporter of that, both now in his current role and in his previous role as minister for housing. I also note his acknowledgement that where concentration of public housing has been part of our history it is clear that in a number of cases that no longer meets the needs of tenants or the broader community needs.

I also acknowledge and support his comment that we need to do what we can to make sure that we break down any negative stereotypes. That is particularly important and was one of the issues raised, as I understand, by a number of people who attended the meeting on the Nicholls development on Monday night. Again, I would like to call on the Canberra Liberals to support the government in its efforts to break down these sorts of stereotypes.

I thank members for their support. I would like to finish by saying that we should all just take a moment to think about what housing means to us and what it means for people across our community. It does not just mean a building; it means a home. It is a place where we go for refuge after a busy day; it is a place where we re-gather as a family. Think about how relieved we are to get home after a holiday. Think about how it makes us feel to be safe in our own home and think about the people who do not feel safe in their own home. It is the place where we raise our children, where we share happy and sad moments in private and where we do not need to care about what we are wearing. It is that sense of safety and security that gives us all the opportunity to participate fully in our community. That is the case for us whether we are renters in the private market, renters in social housing or we own our own home.

I hope these thoughts can inform this continued debate about public housing. I look forward to the report and the update to the Assembly on the last sitting day of this year about the public housing renewal program. I again thank members for their support.

Motion agreed to.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Dr Bourke**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent order of the day No 6, Executive business, relating to the Government Procurement (Notifiable Invoices) Amendment Bill 2015, being called on and debated cognately with order of the day No 1, Private Members' business, relating to the Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill 2014.

Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill 2014

[Cognate bill:

Government Procurement (Notifiable Invoices) Amendment Bill 2015]

Debate resumed from 24 September 2014, on motion by **Mr Coe**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MADAM SPEAKER: I understand that it is the wish of the Assembly to debate this bill, the Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill 2014, cognately with the Government Procurement (Notifiable Invoices) Amendment Bill 2015. That being the case, in debating order of the day No 1 private members' business, members may also address their remarks to order of the day No 6 executive business.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.56): The government supports the intent of the Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill, particularly as reflected in this new, improved version from the shadow minister. The Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill is, of course, now reflecting a little more—once we have made some further amendments it will exactly reflect—the Government Procurement (Notifiable Invoices) Amendment Bill, which I introduced into the Assembly in March.

The bill I introduced was designed specifically to address the significant flaws, I am sorry to say, in Mr Coe's bill. These flaws stem from a series of unnecessary and onerous provisions in Mr Coe's bill that have the effect of imposing administrative red tape and associated costs that could be avoided whilst still delivering the same outcome.

I note that Mr Coe proposes to move in the detail stage a whole series of amendments to his bill which effectively adopt the provisions in the government's bill. So I am pleased that Mr Coe has acknowledged all of the shortfalls, or most of them, in his original bill and has now taken some remedial action when prompted by the government. I do commend Mr Coe for his concerted effort at trying his hand at legislating. All this aside though, Madam Speaker, Mr Coe's revised bill, once he moves his amendments, will still have a number of shortcomings which I will remedy during the detail stage.

There are two significant deficiencies that we can resolve effectively without diminishing transparency of government spending. What matters to the community is the manner in which the government goes about its business and engages with its suppliers. For this reason, one of the amendments that I will move in the detail stage excludes from the definition of a notifiable invoice an invoice for goods, services or works provided by the territory or a territory entity.

As I pointed out when I introduced my bill, information about staff salaries and the many financial transactions between different arms of the service are often as a result of staff movements and should not be captured in the monthly notification of information about notifiable invoices as this information is already available through government financial statements. Mr Coe's bill requires the publication of notifiable invoices on a newly established notifiable invoices register. The government does support this, as I demonstrated in the bill I introduced in March.

The second problem with Mr Coe's amended bill is that it requires the notification of information about invoices within 30 days of the day the invoice was paid. This requirement would need every payment day to be treated separately, with potentially multiple notifications per month. This would be very cumbersome to administer and would generate significant red tape and waste within the public service. We would not want that, would we? It would also be an inconvenience to the community to have to search potentially hundreds of records as opposed to the 12 publications each year that my amendments will generate.

The government amendment requires that a notification be made within 21 days of the end of the month in which the invoice was paid. This would reduce the identification of relevant notifiable invoices for publication to a monthly process, providing for an efficient process whilst ensuring that the information is available in a timely fashion. This is the much more sensible approach taken in the bill that I introduced.

I am pleased to support the intent of Mr Coe's bill, as it will be amended to reflect the government's bill. However, without the two government amendments that I will move in the detail stage, the bill would be significantly less workable and would add significant red tape, with no benefit at all to the community.

Mr Assistant Speaker, this government has a record of supporting transparency but also improvements in procurement practices. We have demonstrated our support for procurement improvements recently through the announcement of the Local Industry Advocate. The advocate will work across government to ensure local businesses get a fair go at government procurement, whether large or small, and in all fields of government procurement. The Local Industry Advocate will work exclusively with the local business community in building capacity and economic activity.

I commend my bill to the Assembly. I note that there will be a series of amendments in the detail stage. Mr Coe will address the deficiencies in his bill and there will be two further government amendments that I have foreshadowed in my contribution in the in-principle stage. This ultimately will lead to the government's bill being adopted.

That is the only workable solution but, in the context of achieving an outcome that I think all parties can support, I certainly commend Mr Coe for trying his hand at legislating. We look forward to cleaning up the bill and getting a better bill as a result of this process.

I note that it did take my bringing forward a bill to address the deficiencies in Mr Coe's bill before we even saw this brought on in private members' business. It was sitting on the notice paper for some months. It seems it was not so urgent but suddenly it becomes urgent when the government introduces a bill that addresses the deficiencies in the original private member's bill. Having said all of that, with the amendments—both Mr Coe's and mine—that we will consider in the detail stage, we will get a workable piece of legislation.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.03): Having watched the debate across the chamber, I think we are at a point where we are almost organised. This has perhaps been the classic example of people talking about not really wanting to know what goes into a sausage. They say similar things about legislation in the parliamentary process. This is perhaps one of those examples. But the good news is that we have agreement right across the chamber and I think we will get an outcome today.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Mr Coe on his first bill ever in six years in the Assembly. I think it is good to get that first one off the blocks. This might be the beginning of something. We will see how we go. I do note that in this term, with just one MLA, the Greens have managed to present nine bills, including two exposure drafts. The Liberals have had four bills with eight members of the Assembly. So it is good to see them actually starting to get the odd bill or two on the table.

This bill essentially inserts a requirement for government to make public the essential information from government payments to business. This is in the interests of continuing to create a more open and transparent ACT government. The Greens support the intent of this bill and the general move towards improving openness and transparency in government. In fact, I will soon be tabling further freedom of information legislation based on my earlier exposure draft. But that is a discussion for another day.

I turn to the details of the bills before us and I focus particularly on Mr Coe's bill because that is where we are going to finish up. I think the two bills largely reflect the same points. The bills introduce the key concept of notifiable invoices, invoices which need to have key information published online. This would capture all payments for contracts above a prescribed threshold but it would not capture salaries in intra-government payments, as there is no invoice.

Mr Coe's bill initially proposed that all invoices of \$10,000 or higher should be made public. However, he is now amending this to \$25,000. I guess the relevance of that threshold is that contracts over \$25,000 must already be notified on the contracts register. So keeping the notifiable invoices threshold at \$25,000 will align it with the existing government requirement to notify contracts at or above \$25,000 on the contracts register.

Although there is certainly merit in lowering the threshold in the longer term, I do agree that at this point it makes sense to work with the existing contracts register threshold. This also aligns with the threshold for needing to seek at least three quotations before undertaking procurement. What we do see here in coming to this threshold is some alignment with existing systems whilst delivering on the intent of the legislation.

I agree with the Chief Minister about the importance of ensuring that the ACT government pays its bills on time, particularly with small and medium-sized businesses. As the Chief Minister pointed out in the tabling speech for his bill, even those suppliers who are not SMEs themselves are generally subcontracting to SMEs. Either way, the government needs to pay its bills on time. In that same vein, it was disappointing to discover that the government does not currently have a system to capture the date an invoice is received.

I had understood that the government was paying its bills within 30 days, as had been outlined and agreed in the 2008 parliamentary agreement. But without a system of knowing actually when the invoice was received, it is hard to know how this can be guaranteed or, in fact, how it can be even measured. That is clearly an area that warrants further work.

I understand that Treasury currently has funding to establish an invoice automation system. This system will enable a provision to commence that requires publishing of the date an invoice was received. That is a positive development. To allow time for this system to be established, the requirement for this is being delayed until July 2016 whilst the rest of the bill will commence in July 2015.

Mr Coe initially proposed keeping invoice information online for five years, but this is now being amended to two years. There are a number of other features and we will go through the amendments in a short time. Overall, I guess I am pleased that there has been enough collaboration—just enough collaboration—to get us to the point where we have a way through and that we will actually have a bill that I think delivers the intent of what we probably all agree on in this place, which is that there is benefit in bringing greater transparency in this place.

We have obviously got some process to go through this morning, but I am happy to indicate that I will be supporting the bill in principle and supporting the amendments as we work through them. At the end of this we will have an agreeable and agreed outcome.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.08): I present the following paper:

Revised explanatory statement to the bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.09): I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 1458*].

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.10): I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name and table a supplementary explanatory statement to the government amendments [*see schedule 2 at page 1459*].

This amendment redefines a notifiable invoice to exclude an invoice for goods, services or works raised by the territory or a territory entity. This amendment effectively tightens the definition of a notifiable invoice to eliminate unnecessary processing associated with the publication of invoices that are not relevant to the public, and I commend this amendment to the Assembly.

Amendment agreed to.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.11): I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 1458*].

Amendment agreed to.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.12): I move amendment No 3 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 1458*].

Amendment agreed to.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.12): I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name [*see schedule 2 at page 1460*].

This amendment sets the time frame in which a territory entity must publish information about a notifiable invoice or provide the information to the director-

general for entry in the notifiable register as being 21 days after the end of the month in which the invoice was paid. The 21-day period facilitates administrative simplicity as it provides a single reference point per month for identification of notifiable invoices. It is also much more convenient to the public than having to search potentially hundreds of records. I commend this amendment to the Assembly.

Amendment agreed to.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.13): I move amendment No 4 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 1459*].

Amendment agreed to.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.13): I move amendment No 5 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 1459*].

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.14): I move amendment No 3 circulated in my name [*see schedule 2 at page 1460*].

This amendment substitutes wording in the dictionary definitions to clarify that the definition of a notifiable invoice is consistent with the wording introduced otherwise by these amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.15): I move amendment No 4 circulated in my name [*see schedule 2 at page 1460*].

This amendment simply changes the heading of a clause in Government Procurement Regulation 2007 to correspond with the wording in the proposed amendments for cross-referencing purposes.

Amendment agreed to.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.15): I move amendment No 6 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 1459*].

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Title.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.16): I thank members for their contributions to the debate on this bill. This bill is an important step in increasing the scrutiny of government spending and is a move towards more open government here in the territory. I am pleased that in this instance it seems all members of the Assembly are on the same page. Whilst we may have different ideas of the thresholds included in the bill, as a principle the concept of declaring how significant sums are spent is something which I truly believe will contribute to better government.

Of course, how we got to this point is somewhat interesting. After tabling my bill, I heard nothing at all from the government. In fact, the first I heard from the government was when a similarly named bill that turned out to be almost exactly the same in content was on the notice paper. In a demonstration of our willingness to compromise, I accepted the government's desire to change several aspects of the bill, and the amended bill, whilst not 100 per cent of what I envisaged, is a good step forward, I believe.

The bill recognises that every cent of over \$4 billion of annual expenditure that this government spends comes from taxpayers who have worked hard for it. Recognising the origins of government funds should lead to greater care over how the money is spent. The bill provides greater scrutiny and transparency to help improve accountability. Accountability should lead to greater care from the government.

The bill as amended requires the government to publish details of all government invoices over \$25,000 on the notifiable invoices register. A notifiable invoice will be any invoice for the prescribed amount or more that is payable for goods, services or works provided by the territory or a territory entity. The prescribed amount is currently set at \$25,000. The notifiable invoices register will include details about invoices, including the name of the entity invoicing the territory, the entity's ABN, the name of the territory entity responsible for the invoice, a brief description of what the invoice is for, the date the invoice was paid, the date the invoice was received, the value of the good, service or work under invoice, and anything else prescribed by regulation.

The government should make it clear to entities who choose to be engaged by the government in the provision of goods, services or work that such payments will be declared. All organisations that receive government funds should do so in the knowledge that if the amount is over the threshold it will be published. The government would be wise to make this perfectly clear to entities.

I also hope that the government will publish the data in a format that is accessible for people who are vision impaired. There are many other jurisdictions around the world that are moving in this direction. Throughout the United States such declarations are

commonplace at various levels of government. In the UK the national government is moving in this direction, and of course councils are too.

One such council, which is one of the leaders, is the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, which publishes numerous documents about local authority spending. Several years ago that council became the first council in Britain to publish all payments to suppliers over £500. Now the threshold is even lower. One such data publication is their March 2015 declaration where the charge to a specific cost centre is greater than or equal to £100. Almost 4,000 payments are declared in that list alone.

In fact, according to the UK national government code, there are requirements for councils to publish data regularly in open and machine readable formats, including expenditure of £500 or more. I am glad that the ACT Legislative Assembly will be leading other states and territories in Australia in this important aspect of reform.

I am pleased to accept the Chief Minister's interest in my bill. I am pleased that Mr Barr wants taxpayers to be able to see how the government is spending their money. Next time, rather than copy and paste my bill, he is welcome to contact my office and seek a conversation on our willingness to accept amendments. This is how things should work here. However, I am thankful that the government seems to be backing my bill today.

In conclusion, I thank members for their support. I look forward and hope all members will indeed support this bill not just today but as the publishing of data occurs. And I believe this will truly represent a progressive move for the Assembly.

Title agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Government Procurement (Notifiable Invoices) Amendment Bill 2015

Ruling by Speaker

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): Standing order 136 states:

Same question may be disallowed

136. The Speaker may disallow any motion or amendment which is the same in substance as any question, which, during that calendar year, has been resolved in the affirmative or negative, unless the order, resolution or vote on such question or amendment has been rescinded.

Today the Assembly debated and passed Mr Coe's Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill 2014. As that bill appears similar to Mr Barr's Government Procurement (Notifiable Invoices) Amendment Bill 2015, Madam Speaker needed to consider whether she should exercise the discretion given to her under standing order 136 and disallow the motion which has been moved to agree to the bill in principle.

In addressing the application of the “same question” rule to bills, *House of Representatives Practice*, at page 357, states:

In using his or her discretion in respect of a bill the Speaker would pay regard to the purpose of the rule, which is to prevent obstruction or unnecessary repetition, and the reason for the second bill.

Madam Speaker has examined both bills and concluded that each seeks to do substantially what the other proposes to do. As the Assembly has now had a substantive debate on the issues contained in both bills, Madam Speaker believes a second debate would be repetitive and thus offend the standing order.

Accordingly, Madam Speaker directs that Mr Barr’s Government Procurement (Notifiable Invoices) Amendment Bill 2015 be withdrawn from the notice paper.

Schools—nurses

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.23): I move

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that the Healthcare Access in Schools Programme was designed to trial a nurse telephone hotline across Canberra schools during Term 1 of the 2015 school year;
- (b) that the trial has met with serious objections from both the ACT Education Union, who represent teachers in ACT public schools, and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the ACT’s peak nursing body;
- (c) that the Education Directorate ignored warnings from the ACT body of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, stating that it was dangerous to remove nurses from special schools; and
- (d) that the issue of nurses in special schools, especially for The Woden School, has been a long standing issue for successive Ministers for Education and Health, with neither willing to take responsibility to ensure a permanent solution for special schools; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to:

- (a) guarantee that all special schools will be quarantined from the Healthcare Access in Schools Programme; and
- (b) reinstate permanent nurses to all ACT special schools, with at least two nurses at Black Mountain School and one nurse to The Woden School, so that students with complex medical needs are not put at risk.

Mr Assistant Speaker, I bring this motion to the Assembly with mixed feelings. I have been advocating for a common-sense approach to this longstanding issue of nurses in special schools for over five years. Until late last year, 2014, it appeared that the problems were finally addressed and the right level of equitable nursing service was being delivered to children in all four special schools in the ACT: the Woden, Malkara, Cranleigh and Black Mountain schools. Families of children at these schools have been able to rely on the administration of their child's healthcare needs by a trained registered nurse. There were signs that our education and health directorates were working well towards a sound common strategy.

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs, under Chair Mary Porter MLA, with Assembly colleagues Giulia Jones MLA and Yvette Berry MLA, and I as deputy chair, made some unanimous bipartisan recommendations in our May 2013 review of the annual report of the Education and Training Directorate. Significantly, the committee has made two recommendations relating to the very issue that we are debating here today. The committee has recommended:

... that the Education and Training Directorate ... improve the communications between the Education and Training Directorate and the disability related services area of ACT Health ... to deliver more integrated service for special needs students in all special needs schools in the ACT ...

The committee has also recommended:

... that fulltime nursing care be provided on an equal and permanent basis across all the special schools in the ACT.

That was a unanimous recommendation by the education committee.

Another committee recommendation, as it has turned out, fell on deaf ears with this government and its health and education ministers. We received news from very concerned parents that the system was being changed again—that the healthcare access at school, HAAS, program was being introduced and Black Mountain School and Woden School would no longer have nurses based in their schools. Instead, they would join a trial program with mainstream schools whereby nurses would delegate their tasks to school staff members.

Despite the protestations of parents, this trial was forced on Black Mountain and Woden schools. There was confusion. As usual, there was no consultation as to the practicality of the implementation. As late as 24 November 2014, even parents at Malkara and Cranleigh schools were being advised, in a joint communication from the ACT education and health directorates, that Malkara and Cranleigh would no longer have a nurse based at the school.

Is it any wonder that parents find it hard to believe anything that Minister Burch and Minister Corbell try to spin to them? Minister Corbell is still saying words quite contrary to the information that I have just given; he claims that there was never any intention and that Malkara and Cranleigh did not have any interruption of the nurses that were on site.

In early April, there was an announcement of a backflip by Minister Burch—that the trial involving special needs schools would be ended and two full-time nurses would be reinstated in a Canberra special school. This was after a trial of the nursing telephone hotline left teachers stressed about having to perform complex medical procedures on students with high needs.

The Australian Education Union has come out in support of the teachers and strongly criticised the education directorate for allowing the trial of a medical advice phone line to go ahead in special schools. This left teaching staff struggling to meet the exacting medication schedules and health issues of the children, at the expense of teaching them. The nurses union was, quite rightly, also up in arms about the duty of care requirements that only qualified nurses should be allowed to perform medical procedures in some instances.

The Australian Education Union secretary, Glenn Fowler, stated in an interview reported in the *Canberra Times* on 15 April this year:

Our default position is educators should be educating. They shouldn't be administering specialised medical treatment.

Mr Fowler added:

Unfortunately we've seen a case study in how not to manage change.

How not to manage change? That just about describes anything this government tries its hand at, be it the Gungahlin Drive extension or the Cotter Dam. Now it wants to go for a trifecta with the light rail experiment that could mean a billion dollar expense item for Canberra taxpayers. Yet we cannot afford nurses in special schools?

An interesting example of taking responsibility is the contrast between the bureaucracy and their political masters. At least ACT Health has had the honesty to concede that its plan to remove nurses from Canberra's special schools probably required more investigation before its rollout. But the Minister for Health still has the temerity to filibuster and try to bluff his way out of this shemozzle; he is still adding to the confusion and uncertainty of parents.

Where is Minister Burch in all this? She is refusing to take any responsibility, despite being minister for education and disability. She is claiming that this is simply a health issue, despite the fact that we are talking about children with special needs in special school environments. There is no danger of her being accused of being too hands on; it is: "Look, no hands." No care and no responsibility. No wonder the teachers are becoming more and more resentful and disenchanted with a minister who cannot even understand the difference between her "no back pay" edict and its impact on the 3,000 teachers she is supposed to be working with.

It is absolutely inconceivable that the government saw fit to remove nurses from Black Mountain School and Woden School, and unclear why they are so determined to deny parents of these special needs children the peace of mind that a permanent registered school nurse provides.

Over the years, the Canberra Liberals have criticised several education and health ministers over the need for nurses in our special schools. Still, here today, neither Minister Corbell nor Minister Burch is willing to take responsibility for the current situation.

During my time as the chair of the Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services, this was one of the issues that our committee looked at closely. This experience has helped to inform my understanding of the importance of nurses in special schools, as shadow minister for education, and how the ongoing issue is negatively impacting on the lives of parents, teachers and, most importantly, the students of these special schools. I note that Ms Burch is having quite a chuckle.

The message was, and still is, that there is a clear need for registered nurses to be located at all special schools in Canberra, to administer health care to these students on site. I await an explanation from either minister on how children with special needs in Cranleigh and Malkara can, and should, have a nurse in their schools, but when it is time for them to transition to Woden or Black Mountain schools the need magically disappears—as does the previously available trained nurse to assist these students, parents and teachers.

In 2011, I began advocating on behalf of one of my constituents who has a son at the Woden School with acute health needs relating to his diabetes. The Woden School has maintained a nurse since Ms Gallagher's intervention, although, despite the unstable health issues of this particular student, the Woden School has never been able to secure a nurse on a permanent basis.

This again highlights another issue that this government has not addressed. In answer to a question directed to the former Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, in regard to why Woden School did not have a permanent school nurse, she responded that initially this was a school that had children with fewer health issues. However, she also stated that enrolments for the 2012 school year indicated that there would be an increase in the number of students with health needs at Woden School. This would indicate to me that the requirement for a permanent school nurse at Woden has become even more necessary in the last few years.

The healthcare access at school program, HAAS, is designed to support children who have a complex or invasive healthcare need to attend school under the provision of nurse-led care during school time. At the end of 2014, the Education and Training Directorate decided to remove full-time nursing staff from the Black Mountain School, Woden, Malkara and Cranleigh schools to trial a nurse telephone hotline throughout term 1 of this year.

Minister Corbell has publicly denied that Malkara and Cranleigh schools were part of the healthcare access at school program. However, I have here with me evidence in both the Cranleigh and Malkara school newsletters from the end of last year, both stating:

During term four there will be changes to the way that health care for students at Malkara and Cranleigh School will be delivered. This will mean that the current model of health care support will no longer be delivered through an onsite nurse.

In addition, parents at Malkara and Cranleigh were sent a letter from the healthcare access at school team clearly stating that the program would commence at the Malkara and Cranleigh schools in term 1 of 2015.

To add further insult to injury regarding Minister Corbell's statements to the contrary, in the December issue of the Malkara school newsletter the school nurse wrote a message of farewell to parents and carers after she had been informed that the changeover to the HAAS program would result in her and a second nurse no longer being on site at the school.

As we understood, Malkara and Cranleigh did have their nurses reinstated at the beginning of term 1 of this year. However, Cranleigh was only reinstated with one nurse as opposed to the two it had had in 2014. The obfuscation and prevarication of Minister Corbell is shameful. As late as yesterday, he was still intent on creating confusion through ill-informed and misleading statements in his media comments.

The trial which went ahead at the Black Mountain School and the Woden School allegedly resulted in the school being left without a permanent nurse on site. The removal of nurses came after the peak nursing body in Australia, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, warned ACT Health officials in January that the removal of nurses from schools was dangerous and was putting the welfare of students in jeopardy.

The trial, which began in February, required nurses to delegate healthcare directions to teachers and teaching assistants. This puts further strain on our teachers in areas beyond their expertise, not only having to focus on a child's learning needs but also being responsible for administering their healthcare, undertaking complex medical procedures, including peg feeding, insulin injection and seizure management. Many of these students cannot communicate through word of mouth; this requires teachers to be extra vigilant for any signs of a health emergency.

All teachers, particularly those in special schools, have huge responsibilities. The introduction of permanent nurses would result in improved care of students and a more appropriate sharing of responsibility for teachers.

The pilot program, which is the responsibility of the Health Directorate but managed through the Education and Training Directorate under the watch of Minister Burch, has met with considerable hostility from the Black Mountain and Woden school communities, including both nurses and teachers. As a result, at the beginning of term 2, two nurses were returned to the Black Mountain School. But the Woden School is still without a permanent full-time nurse.

There is currently a review being undertaken of the healthcare access at school program, HAAS, which makes no assurances that there will not be further changes to

the special schools nursing arrangements, as we have already seen. This will surely only lead to more uncertainty for students, parents, nurses and teachers at these schools.

The Labor government still refuses to guarantee permanent nurses to all special schools across the ACT, which has been causing significant stress for families. The Canberra Liberals want to give families peace of mind. We are calling on the government to quarantine all special schools from the healthcare access at school program, HAAS. Minister Burch has failed not only the parents, teachers and nurses of these children but also the children themselves.

I have been calling on Minister Burch for years to take responsibility and show some leadership as Minister for Disability and minister for education and ensure a permanent solution for nurses in special schools.

It took an intervention from the former Chief Minister and health minister, Katy Gallagher, in 2011, to provide a nurse for the Woden special school, which was then the only special school without a nurse. That situation lasted until 2014, when there was a backflip and nurses were taken out of the Black Mountain and Woden schools in order to trial the HAAS arrangements that are now under review.

Now yet another backflip by Minister Burch, the minister for education and disability, has caused even more uncertainty and angst for parents and teachers, with the ACT education union claiming that after the nurses returned to Black Mountain School at the beginning of term 2, three learning assistants were told not to return to work. These learning assistants were told that they were no longer required. So while the health needs of students at the school have been met, until the government decides to change its mind again, it appears that it is at a cost to the education of other students who require extra learning assistance. It seems that the minister for education is oblivious to the requirements of students and teachers at Canberra special schools and that this government is unprepared to provide them with a reliable and consistent solution.

The Canberra Liberals recognise that this irresponsible attitude by Joy Burch, Simon Corbell and the Barr government needs to stop. (*Extension of time granted.*) We are calling for the government to reinstate permanent nurses to all four special schools in the ACT, with at least two nurses at Black Mountain School and one nurse at each of Woden, Cranleigh and Malkara schools, so that students with complex medical needs are not put at risk. I call on the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, to follow the example of the previous Chief Minister and intervene to bring some sanity to this stubborn approach by Minister Burch and Minister Corbell. I also call on our Greens member, Shane Rattenbury, to support this motion in the Assembly today.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Corbell**) adjourned to a later hour this day.

Youth—services

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (11.40): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Canberra's youth and young people are a valued part of our community with skills and abilities essential to our city's future; and
- (b) that successive Labor governments have invested in Canberra's youth and young people;

(2) further notes the Government's commitment to Canberra's youth and young people through investment in services targeted at youth and young people such as:

- (a) schools, post secondary education and career guidance programs;
- (b) arts and sports programs;
- (c) services for young people with disabilities;
- (d) community based supports for young people in need;
- (e) transport planning and infrastructure;
- (f) grants to empower and support young people;
- (g) support for youth expression;
- (h) out of home care services, including kinship care; and
- (i) services for Indigenous youth; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) maintain its commitment to Canberra's youth and young people as the future of our city; and
- (b) actively seek the views of young people to inform future policy development and the delivery of services to young people.

Canberra's children deserve the best start in life—a commitment from our community, through our government, to their development through their youth and their growth as young people to become well-rounded citizens with productive and meaningful lives. I am going to outline some of the ways this government achieves this through a range of initiatives and programs, and I am sure we will hear a lot from our various ministers about the specific programs in their portfolios.

This government's commitments to health, education, jobs and transport all have implications for our young people. Young people deserve all the help we can give to ensure they reach their full potential as valued members of our society. Youth engagement services assist vulnerable young people who are disengaged or at risk of

disengaging from family and other services, including education. Youth engagement services are likely to have a short to medium-term involvement with a young person and actively engage the young person and connect them to a support network or to medium to long-term services that will meet their needs. Youth engagement services providers work in partnership with families and other services providers, including case management services, to support the young person's engagement and transition.

Youth engagement services are being delivered in regional networks and across the ACT by Northside Community Service and Anglicare in the inner north-Gungahlin network; Belconnen Community Service in the Belconnen network; Woden Community Service, Southside Community Services and Anglicare in the south-Weston network; the YWCA of Canberra in the Tuggeranong network; and the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation across the ACT.

From 1 November 2013 an additional \$5 million over four years for youth engagement services was made available to seven service providers. The additional funding has allowed for a greater focus on early intervention and wraparound services through additional youth worker positions across the community sector; the refurbishment of youth centre buildings, resources and facilities for young people; resources and equipment for a range of structured programs to develop living skills, nutrition, leadership and programs for young mothers; outreach to support difficult to engage young people; and equipment and material for after-hours activities such as breakfast clubs and band nights.

Carers are at the heart of support for children and young people in out of home care. Carers provide the love, support and stability that vulnerable children and young people need as they rebuild their lives. We are stepping up for foster carers, more so than ever before, with a more equitable system of support, better information and streamlined processes. Kinship carers are the biggest providers of support for children and young people in care, and we are stepping up for kinship carers. Of the 620 children and young people in out of home care in the ACT in February, 26 per cent are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. This is something I talked about in my adjournment debate last night, as you may remember, Madam Assistant Speaker.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle encourages kinship care placements within extended family. That means that over half of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Canberra are being looked after by their extended family. Kinship carers may often not have the full amount of information for supporting children that foster carers do, so we are making efforts to address that through enhanced support and training opportunities. A step up for our kids will mean better support for kinship carers so that they can do the best for their children.

Youth InterACT is the ACT government's youth participation policy. It aims to encourage 12 to 25-year-olds from a range of backgrounds and experiences to have their say about youth issues in Canberra. Youth InterACT comprises the Youth Advisory Council and youth consultation, grants and scholarships, Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards, an annual youth conference and the Youth InterACT website.

In the ACT there are a number of ways in which young people can have their say on issues that are important to them on an ongoing basis. The Youth Advisory Council provides the Minister for Children and Young People with advice on issues relating to young people in the ACT. Its 15 members are aged between 12 and 25 years and are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds that represent our broader community, including gender balance, disabilities and representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Youth Advisory Council not only provides the minister with valuable advice related to young people but also supports the development of young people as leaders. The council is a means through which young people can learn about areas such as community leadership, policy development and working with government. The current Youth Advisory Council has participated in a range of events during National Youth Week and is preparing a work plan to guide its activities for the remainder of the year. Their three priority areas are gender and sexuality, youth homelessness, and drugs and alcohol.

The ACT government provides a number of grants and scholarship opportunities for young people. The ACT government established the Audrey Fagan young women's enrichment grants program in memory of the ACT's first female chief of police. Ms Fagan was a strong supporter of women in leadership roles and also a generous mentor to young women. The enrichment grants aim to inspire young women to enhance their skills and knowledge within their areas of interest. These grants of up to \$2,000 support young women to attend further education, compete in sporting events, attend science forums and more.

The Youth InterACT grants provide young people aged 12 to 25 years of age with funding of up to \$1,500 to organise projects, events, activities and programs that benefit other young people in the ACT. Youth InterACT also provides small scholarships of up to \$500 for individual young people aged 12 to 25 to attend courses and events. The Young Canberra Citizen of the Year Awards are now in their 25th year, and they recognise the achievements of young people aged between 12 and 25 years. Recently the Youth Coalition of the ACT hosted the Just Sayin' forum at the Legislative Assembly, where the Minister for Community Services, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Children and Young People listened directly to a number of young people talk about what is important to them.

Our youth need not just a caring and supporting environment but wise mentoring and quality education. This government's commitment to education is reflected in our investment in our school system and the great results our students regularly achieve when measured in NAPLAN, PISA scores, maths and science literacy or other markers. We have over 130 schools in the ACT, providing a wide range of choice between government and non-government sectors. We also provide quality support services for special needs students, the most advanced students and those incorporating vocational education into their school program.

Our commitment to developing the professional skills of our teachers is evident in the expansion of the Teacher Quality Institute and our support for teachers' professional

development. The quality of teaching and our teachers makes the biggest difference to the lives of our youth in any classroom. That said, we are also renewing the infrastructure of our schools and building new schools as required. I am very proud of the work being undertaken to modernise the schools in Belconnen. For example, we are investing in improvements to Belconnen High School, built in 1971, with a master plan based on its current enrolment and the projected longer term enrolment. We are upgrading facilities and clearing old buildings at the end of their useful lives.

Macgregor Primary School, one of the first schools built in Belconnen back in 1968, has been expanded, with new classrooms in the last few years, and now car park works have been designed to increase the number of spaces, improve safety for pedestrians and create a safe school set-down and pick-up area. We have also completed upgrades of the toilets at the Charnwood Dunlop Primary School, which was originally built in 1975; new lifts at Canberra High School; a library upgrade and new additional classrooms and toilets at the Cranleigh School, originally built in 1974; and installation of technology to more efficiently manage the electricity supply, called power factor correction equipment, at Maribyrnong Primary School, Belconnen High School, Melba Copland Secondary School and the University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra.

The Belconnen Regional Trades Skills Centre means vocational training facilities in seven government high schools and colleges are being refurbished to industry standard, essential to maintaining compliance with national RTO standards. The Belconnen Regional Trades Skills Centre will increase access for all students to training and employment pathways in such areas as automotive, construction, engineering, food processing, furnishing, horticulture and hospitality. It fits into this Labor government's commitment to providing a range of career pathways to our young people, from vocational training feeding into the CIT, for example, to tertiary education at our world-standard universities.

This government is also committed to diversifying our economy, giving young people more options. This is especially important in the face of Liberal federal government cutbacks to the public service that are disproportionately affecting young people. The extensive ACTION bus network is also an essential resource for our young people getting about town on weekends or using the dedicated, subsidised school bus network. The student concessions offered through school MyWay cards are also a major cost saving to families.

The government provides strong support for youth arts activities. The ACT arts fund supports a number of ACT arts organisations that provide arts development and arts access programs and services specifically for young people. These include Belconnen Arts Centre, Ausdance ACT, Canberra Youth Theatre, Music for Canberra, QL2 Dance, Tuggeranong Arts Centre and Warehouse Circus. There are also a number of arts organisations which include programs that support young artists, including the ACT Writers Centre, Canberra Glassworks, ScreenACT and the You Are Here festival. The Belconnen Arts Centre, Megalo Access Arts, M16 ArtSpace and Tuggeranong Arts Centre also provide access to workshop spaces and classes as well as exhibition programs for young people.

Many of our key arts organisations also collaborate with youth organisations. For example, the Tuggeranong Arts Centre partners with Rotary for the Rotary youth arts prize, now in its 21st year. Through these programs young people are able to develop their artistic skills and be mentored by leading artists in safe and inclusive environments. The government's funding agreement with the ANU includes a range of music and visual arts programs delivered in ACT schools where students develop skills in singing and playing instruments across classical and jazz music through the ANU School of Music. The singing program alone attracts some 8,000 students a year. Students also gain an understanding and appreciation of the visual arts through programs delivered by the ANU School of Art.

The ACT arts fund also includes a specific program for young artists known as start-up grants for activities that assist, encourage, develop or promote the artist and their arts practice. The Cultural Facilities Corporation presents a number of theatre productions throughout the year at the Canberra Theatre Centre that are targeted at young audiences, and the Canberra Museum and Gallery and the three historic places present an extensive range of education programs and family programs for young people. These include popular programs such as CMAG on Sunday, "T" is for toddler, school programs and school holiday activities.

The arts are, of course, a core part of the ACT Education and Training Directorate's curriculum and there are a number of dedicated arts programs for students, including step into the limelight and the instrumental music program. It funds a number of arts organisations to deliver arts programs in schools, including dance through QL2 Dance and Kulture Break, and music through Musica Viva ACT.

An important part of developing young people's fitness, health, coordination and socialisation is our support for junior sport. This includes the provision of indoor and outdoor sporting facilities, grants to sporting clubs and bodies, and the school health and fitness programs supported by gym facilities and ovals at schools. I am proud to note the upgrading of sporting and fitness facilities in Belconnen, such as the Kippax oval redevelopment, the Weetangera oval upgrade, the fitness facilities at John Knight park and the investment in the University of Canberra sports commons. That includes not just elite sports facilities but community sports facilities and accommodation for sports administrators. For example, one of those organisations based at the University of Canberra sports commons is Good Sports ACT. It recently received an ACT government grant as part of the healthy food at sport program to work with ACT sports clubs with junior players to develop and support healthier canteens and provide free workshops for club volunteers on food safety and nutrition.

The commitment of this ACT Labor government to Canberra's youth is clear. It is a commitment to the future of our city, and I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.55): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit in paragraph (1)(b) the word "Labor".

The motion before us today highlights the importance of supporting the youth in our city, the importance of recognising that they are our future and the importance of us being responsible custodians of the future that they will inherit. I think it is important

to recognise the statement that Dr Bourke made in this place yesterday in relation to youth week, when he said:

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.

It is normally the case, however, that when members of the government need to come out publicly and say that this is not one of those “once a year experiences” the chances are that youth week reminded them how little they have engaged with young people in this city previously.

I have an advantage over the minister when it comes to relating with young people—that is, the memories of what it is like to be a young person in this city are much fresher in my memory than they are in the minds of those members opposite. Mr Gentleman is the first person I have ever seen who is able to make posts to Twitter with nothing more than a pen and paper. During National Youth Week, at an event hosted here in the Assembly called Just Sayin’, which members opposite have spoken quite fondly of, members of the Assembly who attended included you, Madam Assistant Speaker, Mr Rattenbury, Ms Berry, Mr Gentleman and me. As is common practice at these kinds of events, we made use of social media to engage with not only the people in the room but also those following the event on Twitter. I was surprised to see that Mr Gentleman, who was sitting in front of me, in the front row, with nothing more than a pen and paper, managed to tweet or re-tweet in excess of a dozen times. Minister, if you are serious about wanting to genuinely engage with young people, don’t be a faker. Don’t hide behind your staff. As with most things in life, you will get out what you put in.

All too often when we discuss youth in this place the focus is on the disadvantaged or the marginalised. That is not to say they are not worthy of discussion but we often forget that the vast majority of young people in our city do not fall into these categories. They are focused on friendships, study or employment opportunities and how they might make their dreams a reality.

Touching on the substance of Dr Bourke’s motion, he asks the Assembly to take note of the government’s commitment to a number of policy areas that are relevant to youth. Paragraph (2)(b) notes the investment in sports programs. I think it is safe to say that this government’s desire to charge a premium to access public ovals for organised sport continues to be a barrier to youth participation in sport, simply because the cost continues to be prohibitive.

Paragraph (2)(d) talks about community support for youth but makes no mention of the funding that Mr Gentleman’s predecessor, Ms Burch, removed from youth drop-in centres. Paragraph (2)(e) raises the issue of transport planning. This is fundamental to a functioning city for young people, yet it is disappointing that we continue to be unable to have a bus system that caters for the habits of the city’s youth—namely, the inability to catch a bus into the Lanyon valley much after 9 pm on any given night. This simply restricts opportunities for employment and opportunities to have an active social life.

Paragraph (2)(i) raises the important issue of providing services to the territory's Indigenous youth. It is an important policy if we are to break some of the generational underprivilege within our Indigenous community. I am proud to have brought the need for further support of Gugan Gulwan into this place previously, in the form of a motion that sought to identify additional community space to meet the growing need that Gugan faces whilst trying to service the Indigenous community in Tuggeranong.

The best thing we can do in this place is ensure that there is a future for young people in this city, that Canberra presents an opportunity to be part of a city that recognises the desires of its youth and that the city has a diverse offering of adequate opportunities for work, play and to live.

I think my amendment is quite self explanatory and it will better reflect the history of this place. I will be keenly watching to see if this newfound interest in youth matters by those opposite manages to be sustained for the duration of the next year or if this will be simply one of those once-a-year experiences.

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) (11.59): I thank Dr Bourke for his motion and I welcome the opportunity to speak about how valued Canberra's youth and young people are in our community and how they are being supported to realise their full potential through the development of skills and abilities that are essential to both their future and the city's future.

Supporting our young people is particularly relevant in the ACT. Canberra has one of the youngest populations of any state or territory, with approximately 77,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 25 residing in the ACT, representing more than 20 per cent of Canberra's population.

The ACT government supports youth-friendly planning of our city and region. A youth-friendly city is a city committed to fulfilling young people's rights. It is a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of youth are an integral part of public policies, programs and decisions. It is, as a result, a city that is fit for us all.

In the ACT there are a number of ways in which young people can have their say on issues that are important to them on an ongoing basis. In particular, the ACT government invites young people to have a voice in decision-making through the Youth Advisory Council. The Youth Advisory Council provides me, as the Minister for Children and Young People, with advice on issues related to young people in the ACT. The 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, disabilities, and representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Youth Advisory Council also supports the development of young people as leaders. The council is a means through which young people can learn about areas such as community leadership, policy development and working with government. The ACT government will continue to work to have young people's voices heard in the decisions that affect them.

Canberra's young people recognise that improving our transport system is crucial to the city's development and to building communities. Young Canberrans will ultimately live with the results of today's transport planning and infrastructure decisions. That is why, as Minister for Planning, I actively sought the views of young people as part of the community consultation for my statement of planning intent.

Through a workshop for the statement with young people, I heard that many young Canberrans want to be able to live a short walk, bike ride or public transport trip from the places where they work and socialise. They want to see a variety of transport options available, and greater safety and priority for pedestrians and bicycle riders. Not all Canberrans have access to a car or are able to drive. Our transport system needs to provide options for everyone, including our young people.

The ACT government also promotes young people's aspirations and assists young people to achieve their aspirations by providing financial support and grants. The Youth InterACT grants provide young people aged between 12 and 25 years with funding of up to \$1,500 to organise projects, events, activities and programs that benefit other young people in the ACT, as well as small scholarships for individual young people who wish to enhance their learning capacity, sporting or career development.

The ACT government also seeks to recognise and honour our young people who have made significant contributions to Canberra in areas including community work, sport, education, science, culture, the arts or the environment. The young Canberra citizen of the year awards are now in their 25th year. They provide us with the opportunity to recognise the achievements of some of our outstanding young people aged between 12 and 25 years.

For most young people Canberra is a great place to live—a city full of brilliant possibilities waiting to be realised. But not everyone is able to make the most of these opportunities. Some young people face considerable challenges that many of us cannot begin to imagine.

The ACT government has invested in youth engagement services provided by the child, youth and family services program. This program supports some of our most disadvantaged and marginalised young people. The program commenced in March 2012 to provide early intervention services for vulnerable families, youth and children. The introduction of the program included a shift in the role of youth drop-in services to a more proactive youth engagement model that is in line with methods that are used both nationally and internationally.

To better support young people who are vulnerable, we have expanded the program. In November 2013 an additional \$5 million over four years for youth engagement services was made available to seven service providers. This funding has been used to employ more youth engagement workers and deliver more programs. The additional funding has allowed for a greater focus on early intervention and wraparound services through additional youth worker positions across the community sector; the refurbishment of youth centre buildings and facilities for young people; resources and equipment for a range of structured programs to develop living skills, nutrition,

leadership and programs for young mothers; assertive outreach to support difficult to engage young people; and equipment and material for after-hours activities such as breakfast clubs and band nights. It is through this work that we support young people to connect with services and develop a strengthened support network to achieve within their community.

The government also supports young people in the out of home care system through a step up for our kids, a \$16 million investment by the ACT government over the next five years. The aim of a step up for our kids is simple—to provide vulnerable children and young people with loving, safe homes and the support to lead productive lives. For some children and young people a safe and loving home is not possible. We want the best outcomes to be reached for all children and young people.

A step up for our kids, the ACT's new five-year strategy for out of home care services, is about investing in the future of our most vulnerable children and young people. It is about keeping kids at home where possible and preventing disadvantage for future generations.

As is the case nationally, the ACT community is facing many challenges when it comes to providing out of home care services. Outcomes for young people who have been in care are generally less favourable compared to the broader community, whether it is socially, in education or in employment.

Here in the ACT we are stepping up for vulnerable children, young people and their families, and a step up for our kids will transform our support for them. A step up for our kids creates an environment that goes further than before in delivering the right kind of support to young people at the right time in their lives. We want to make sure that young people are given every chance to stay with their families, and, where that is not possible, that they have all the support they need to build new lives.

This system truly places the young person's voice at its centre. It is based on trauma-informed support that better takes into account the trauma endured by a child or young person who has experienced abuse and neglect. The professional support for young people coming into care through a new approach to therapeutic assessments will address this trauma and recast services around the needs of the child or young person.

We are going to create more stable lives for young people in care by enabling organisations to provide a system of care and support that stays with the child as they grow, rather than making them move from one service provider to another.

We will continue to step up for young people as they approach 18. We understand that young people can be particularly vulnerable as they make the transition to adulthood. That is why the carer subsidy will continue until age 21 where appropriate, to support this crucial period in a young person's life.

We want to improve the education, health and participation outcomes for young people in out of home care. We are creating a more sustainable system, providing our young people with the foundations for a happy, productive adulthood. Most importantly, we are helping young people to take a step up in their lives.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (12.09): I thank Dr Bourke for raising this issue today. There is a range of ways that the ACT government supports young people. Dr Bourke's motion lists many of them. From the ACT youth commitment in education to ensure that no young person is lost from education, training or employment, to the newly developed step up framework for out of home care, the government has a clear responsibility and obligation to provide a safe and supportive city for our young people. I am not going to go through the list of services mentioned in Dr Bourke's motion, but I acknowledge the breadth and width of services the government provides.

But to maintain the commitment to young people in Canberra as a valued part of the present and future of the territory's fabric requires more than just meeting our obligations and protecting those who are vulnerable. The Greens believe that children and young people have the right to live free from physical and emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination, all things that I am sure members in this place would readily agree with.

We also know that these beliefs are backed up by international treaties and law. The protection and promotion of the rights of children and young people in the ACT, such as the right to education and safety, is consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. To achieve a further enhancement of these rights and protections, the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement that formed this current government has some specific items that relate to reducing disadvantage and promoting inclusion for young people in Canberra.

This is a good place to start with the government's ongoing commitments in this area. It highlights that, while we recognise there is, as always, more to do, we are working hard to overcome these barriers. We have the item that will create a true needs-based funding model for education, something that will happen despite the ridiculous chicanery of the current federal government. We have also, under the agreement, provided increased funding to regional community services to better work with their young clients and to provide enhanced support to young people transitioning out of care. We as a government want to promote a truly socially and culturally inclusive Canberra that celebrates its diversity.

To maintain the government's commitment to young people, we need to look not only at areas of disadvantage and vulnerability; we also want children and young people to be valued as active citizens of the ACT and to be respected and valued for who they are now as well as who they may become in the future.

We live in a young and vibrant city that has a high percentage of young people—that is, those aged between 12 and 25. But how does the government ensure that we are talking to, and more importantly listening to, young people? I know that this has been an issue of recent discussion, as other members of the Assembly would know, coming off the back of the Youth Coalition of the ACT's Just Sayin' event, held as part of National Youth Week.

I know that a number of members were at that event. I personally found it a very worthwhile experience. There was quite a diverse selection of young speakers that presented on a range of different topics. They came from very different perspectives as well. There were different age groups. Overall, I think that anybody who went to that session got a new perspective on some key issues. I think we were all impressed by the calibre of the young people presenting, the passion of their arguments and the diversity of ideas that they presented to us.

The Youth Coalition is the peak body for youth affairs in the ACT. In addition to events like Just Sayin' it has also undertaken work to help identify the views of young people and present those views to government. I instance the 2012 rate Canberra survey. The 1,376 young people in the ACT and surrounding region who participated in the survey provided an inaugural snapshot of the key issues, experiences and views of young people aged 12 to 25 years in the ACT and surrounding region. It is worth touching on a few of the points from the survey results.

One of them is the top five personal concerns for young people. They were school, work or study, stress, body image, feeling sad or anxious and finding things to do in Canberra. In some ways that list perhaps should not surprise us. These are themes that came up at the Just Sayin' event but also I think they come up if you have teenagers in your life. If you follow what they are up to on social media, these things are consistent through their commentary. I think that presents very concrete feedback to us as members of this place to be mindful of as we think about the broad spectrum of the community that we seek to serve.

Furthermore, in the survey young people thought that the following general issues were the most important: family relationships, human rights, mental health and wellbeing, access to health services and poverty. The biggest barrier to young people's participation in social and recreational activities was "I am too busy" or "I do not have time", followed by "It is too expensive" and "I cannot travel there; it is too hard to get there."

This gives us some real pointers as we think about things like transport policy. We should really reflect on whether it meets the needs of all of the community. Young people often are the ones that do not have cars. They either are too young to drive or perhaps have not saved up enough money to have a car yet. When I think about transport policy, dealing with social isolation and enabling all members of our community to fully participate in community life, this is something that I am very cognisant of.

I turn to other findings of the survey. Most young people were unsure whether, or did not think that, they were valued by the ACT community. Many felt that the ACT community held negative stereotypes of young people and did not consider them to be important enough to listen to. Interestingly, 60 per cent of young people aged 16 and 17 thought that young people of this age should be allowed to vote in government elections if it were optional rather than compulsory for this age group. That, of course, is a policy the Greens have held for some time but it is interesting to see this result. I think it is often a stereotype that young people are not engaged in politics, that they are not interested in current affairs and the like. To see such a significant percentage

saying they would like to have the opportunity to engage is something that I think we might all reflect on.

From these results overall it is clear that we do need to find ways to better connect with the young people in our community on a variety of different issues and perhaps in some new ways. As I have said, more importantly we need to take these issues raised on board and work to address them in a whole-of-government, whole-of-community way. However, young people are not a homogenous group and do not necessarily define themselves by their age. That is why we need to be broader in our approach. Investing in targeted services is only part of the solution.

Some of the other areas we can improve to maintain our commitment to young people include creating more opportunities for genuine consultation, not just information provision. I was speaking to that briefly before, but I think that is a really important point. For example, we must be careful to remember that the views in letters to the editor of the *Canberra Times* or the views of those who participate in community councils are not the be-all and end-all when it comes to community views.

They certainly represent some part of the community views but I do not think anyone who goes to a community council sees too many young people in the 12 to 25 age group. I cannot imagine they provide a lot of letters to the newspaper editor. So we need to make sure that our views are not shaped solely by those channels and that we find genuine ways to make sure we take on board the broader perspectives.

We also need to work with local businesses and industry bodies to attract and, more importantly, to retain young people starting out in the workforce via traineeships and apprenticeships and find more substantive ways to ensure that the voice of young people is heard on the many committees and boards we have that deal with issues that affect the whole community.

These are challenging times for young people in Canberra. The territory is dealing with the loss of federal public service jobs. Members may remember the blunt end to some of the commonwealth government's graduate programs that left young people high and dry with an uncertain future due to budget cuts. The higher education system is still unsure of its future in terms of funding and deregulation. The youth allowance and other human services payments are still under the shadow of the brutal Commission of Audit that could deliver a six-month payment-free period for young people seeking work.

The list goes on but it is fair to say that young people stand to lose a lot under the current federal government. Certainly for those who are at the more vulnerable end of the spectrum, these sorts of changes and cutbacks are particularly threatening and particularly create uncertainty for them. The ACT government needs to watch these issues carefully as they progress and maintain our strong record of not furthering disadvantage but promoting social inclusion and social equity.

In closing, I fully support this motion that calls on us to maintain our commitment to young people and to enhance and actively seek the views of young people. It is now up to all of us to consider if we are truly using these views to inform the development and delivery of these services.

That is it; we need to make sure that we not only look at these issues through the eyes of our respective ages and with the experience that we have but also through the eyes of those who are living in that age group and who have a different perspective. It is a perspective that is informed by where they see the world from. Therefore, it is a very accurate way of assessing how these services work and how we need to respond to some of their concerns.

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) (12.19): I thank Dr Bourke for moving this motion today. We all know that education lays a foundation for a successful life. It is a fundamental principle of the Labor government to support education because we know that it changes lives for the better. Therefore, we are committed to building on the strength of our education system and to provide opportunities for all students to benefit from a great education.

Each year the government, through the Education and Training Directorate, conducts a telephone survey of school leavers. Known as “Where are they now?” this survey helps the government understand where ACT students are working and studying and what their future intentions are. It provides a great resource to highlight the positive impact education has on young Canberrans. The survey results last year indicated that 92 per cent of young people were studying or intending to study post-school; 61 per cent of graduates applied for a university place; and 98 per cent of these graduates were successful in gaining a place.

The ACT continues to have the highest proportion of students completing year 12 of all the states and territories, and our schools provide a diverse offering, from maths and science to languages, music, sports and vocational courses which equip our young people with the skills and attitudes they need to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Just last week I was at Melrose High School speaking with the principal there, Simon Vaughan, and the science teacher, Geoff McNamara, who won this year’s Prime Minister’s prize for excellence in science teaching in secondary schools for the school’s fantastic ACE program. This program sees students at school engage in cutting edge science and being partnered with some of Australia’s and the world’s leading minds.

Three-quarters of our students who finished year 12 at a specialist school in 2013 were participating in support programs for people with a disability, such as transition to work, community access or social participation at the time of the survey in 2014. This continues the government’s support for all students across our schools.

This year the new Canberra College Cares facilities opened. Just recently the new intensive English centres in Gungahlin and Wanniasa have been completed and the Coombs school in Molonglo is scheduled to open for the beginning of next year. The Canberra Institute of Technology continues to support our commitment to engaging young people in mainstream education and services to gain years 10 and 12. CIT also, of course, offers a fabulous range of vocational education and training opportunities for our youth.

We have seen, for example, the Ricky Stuart Foundation and the government joining in partnership to support young people with a disability by providing a respite centre. It will be operated by Marymead. This has brought government, business and the community together and it is a positive connection for many in our community.

The NDIS clearly will have an impact on young people with a disability here in the ACT. Before the NDIS, community members were supported through rounds of the enhanced service offer, which saw 20 per cent of those successful grants go to young people.

Further, we are working with House With No Steps to offer a transition from education to adult life program which makes sure that all people in our community have access to and support for participation broadly across our community. I support the motion moved by Dr Bourke and I commend it to the Assembly.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (12.23): I will close the debate. I am going to oppose the amendment moved by Mr Wall and all those little quibbles that he brought out. But I am glad of his support for the motion and I do not want to labour our differences. I was particularly reminded in the contribution by Mr Gentleman, the Minister for Planning, about the importance of young people's views in planning. After all, we are building the city in which they will live.

I have already talked about the breadth and depth of offerings that the ACT government provides for youth, particularly in sport, arts, education, grants and scholarships, as well as engagement through things like the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council. But I will just finish off by talking a little more about Indigenous youth and where we are going with this issue.

The government provides a range of services to support Indigenous youth in the territory, and particularly through Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, which provides outreach support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that are at risk of experiencing, or who are transitioning from, homelessness.

In 2013-14, Gugan Gulwan received funding of \$71,196 from the Community Services Directorate for homelessness services delivery. Furthermore, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, cultural and scholarship grant programs encourage and support local emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, including young leaders. Youth aged 16 to 25 have received funding through grants for programs such as the youth leadership cultural camp.

Other scholarship grant recipients are able to develop their knowledge and skills by undertaking study and training to enhance and support their employment prospects in the ACT by gaining further skills and qualifications. The scholarship grants have been used for recognised training courses, as supplementary funding to participants on existing leadership programs, for professional and personal development, and also to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the ACT who are undertaking entry level qualifications. These grants provide positive opportunities to promote the ACT government's commitment to improving educational and leadership outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

I will also talk a little about the services provided to Indigenous youth at Bimberi, which is a very small but critical number of young people. Bimberi provides a number of supports and services to Indigenous young people, including a family engagement officer who supports young people and their families whilst a young person is in custody. The position is an identified position that is responsible for supporting Indigenous young people and their families, cultural activities, recognition of Aboriginal celebrations and community connections. The family engagement officer is also a member of the Reconciliation Australia panel.

Narrabundah House provides support for young Indigenous males on youth justice orders and those transitioning from custody. The Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre within Bimberi has a transition officer who also supports young people transitioning from custody to education and employment. That position is an identified position. The transition officer works in partnership with the family engagement officer to facilitate cultural awareness activities and celebrations.

There is an Indigenous counsellor from Relationships Australia attending Bimberi on a needs basis to provide one-on-one and group yarning sessions. Representatives from Winnunga attend Bimberi on a weekly basis to participate in sporting programs and activities. Gugan Gulwan, as I have previously mentioned, also conducts arts programs on a weekly basis and a music program in the school holidays. The Aboriginal Legal Service provides services to young people in Bimberi, including welfare support as required.

Bimberi has interconnecting rooms that offer the opportunity to accommodate Indigenous siblings and family members who are in custody at Bimberi at the same time. They are about to commence a new Indigenous program for this term, targeting land management, leadership, cultural identity, traditional ecological knowledge and music. The program will be delivered as a partnership between Greening Australia, the Environment and Planning Directorate and the Indigenous Leadership Centre.

A Bimberi Youth Justice Centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services committee has been formed to discuss and identify programs and services for young people in Bimberi and to respond to those gaps in services so that we have some adaptive knowledge working to deliver better services in a facility that I am sure we will all agree is very important and that is doing very important work. I will close there, Madam Speaker, and once again commend the motion to the Assembly.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.29 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Hospitals—University of Canberra

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, over three years ago, on 20 January 2012, the previous health minister released a report which

identified the University of Canberra as the preferred site for the new Canberra subacute hospital. The report estimated the cost of the hospital at \$282 million to \$342 million for 200 beds plus outpatient facilities. A deal was signed with the university on 10 September 2012. The number of planned overnight hospital beds has now been reduced from 200 to 140. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation has said that the reduction to 140 beds is a “glaring discrepancy in respect of the ACT government commitment made in 2011”. Minister, when were plans for the numbers of overnight subacute beds at the new north Canberra hospital cut from 200 to 140?

MR CORBELL: We have not cut the number of beds. This is a subacute hospital. It is a mixture of overnight and day bed accommodation. The total number of beds is 215. That is the number of beds proposed, and that is made up of 140 overnight beds and 75 day beds. That is entirely appropriate for the model of care. This is not an acute care hospital facility. It is a subacute hospital. It is designed to meet the needs of an ageing population, of a growing population, of a population that, for the first time, will get a dedicated subacute and rehabilitation facility to meet their needs. So whether it is people with dementia, whether it is people with mental illness, whether it is people recovering from a serious accident, injury or surgery, that is what this facility is for. We have been very clear, and we are maintaining our commitment to invest in hospital and health services in our community. The number of beds is over 200, consistent with the previous commitments made by the government.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why were the numbers of overnight subacute beds at the north Canberra hospital cut from 200 to 140?

MR CORBELL: They have not been.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, what is the current cost estimate for this project?

MR CORBELL: The cost estimate for this project is over \$100 million. The government have made provision in the budget for it but, we recognise that we are engaged in a competitive process for the delivery of this infrastructure. We do not wish to precondition the market to a particular figure because we want to get value for money for taxpayers. So we have made the appropriate provisions in the budget and we will now proceed through the delivery stage and the tender stage with the private sector to get value for money. Unlike with other capital bills that are traditionally the case in the health sector, we are seeking tenders not just for the construction but for the maintenance of this facility over a set term. It is very important that we get that package right and that we get a competitive process that delivers value for money for ACT ratepayers.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

Mr SMYTH: Minister, is the north Canberra subacute hospital yet another over-promised, underfunded and delayed piece of infrastructure that is symbolic of you and your government?

Mr CORBELL: It certainly was not a proposal that those opposite sought to in any way invest in or commit to. This Labor administration has taken the decision to invest in infrastructure that our community needs as it grows and as it ages.

Mr Hanson: This is a funded policy of the Liberal Party.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

Mr Hanson: He's misleading the Assembly, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Corbell. Stop the clock. Withdraw, please, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Would you stand up when you withdraw, please.

Mr Hanson: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. Mr Corbell.

Mr CORBELL: This is a very important investment in health infrastructure—over 200 beds for subacute and rehabilitation services in our community to meet the needs of an ageing population, people with mental illness and those recovering from serious accident or surgery. That is the purpose of the facility. At the same time, by co-locating it on the University of Canberra campus, we will leverage the opportunities that come from the health research and health professional training that occurs at the University of Canberra. It will give investment opportunity and growth opportunity to our second largest tertiary institution. It will help create jobs in the health sector. It will help build on the knowledge-based economy that we as a government are trying to foster for this city. We are focused on the smart, knowledge-based jobs that our city needs. The University of Canberra public hospital, as well as being a critical piece of health infrastructure, is a critical part of the government strategy to support growth, innovation and jobs in the knowledge economy that our city so desperately needs.

Schools—nurses

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. In 1997 the education directorate developed a policy entitled “Administration of prescribed medication, catheters and injections for students”. The policy did not apply to special schools where there is a registered nurse or other qualified health professional available. Is the policy still current and is it now applicable to special schools?

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister for education and minister—

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will take that question as Minister for Health, with responsibility for the administration of the services provided by nurses in special schools. I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. I will need to take some further advice from my directorate and I will provide an answer to the member in due course.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before we proceed, I did not call Mr Corbell. Mr Corbell interrupted. This was a question about education. I have written down here “1997 education department policy”. The question was: “Is the policy still current?” I am not quite sure that the Minister for Health can answer the question about whether the policy is still current.

Mr Corbell: It relates to health care in schools, Madam Speaker, and I am responsible for the delivery of those services in those schools.

Mr Doszpot: Point of order, Madam Speaker. We are talking about the specific education policy that is under the education directorate.

MADAM SPEAKER: I understand the point. I took the notes as you were asking the question. If the government chooses to answer the question in another way, I cannot direct the government on how to answer the question. Do you have a supplementary, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I do. Minister, what is the impact of the HAAS trial on the current policy, which has not been amended for 18 years?

MR CORBELL: I have been very clear about what we are endeavouring to do. The HAAS program is a contemporary program—contemporary with standards of care provided in other jurisdictions interstate and internationally. But we recognise the concerns that are raised by parents, by teachers and by the respective unions, and we also recognise the concerns raised by nurses about whether or not they are being best utilised in these care settings. We will work through these issues before seeking resolution of what the final policy setting should be, and that is exactly what we are doing right now. Indeed, we are right in the middle of a debate in this place, and once question time is concluded we will go back to that debate, where I will be able to elaborate further on those issues.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, will any staff of special schools need to routinely administer injections as a result of a reduced presence of nurses?

MR CORBELL: Staff will only be delivering care consistent with their competency and training to do so. Each care arrangement for a child is different, and only those matters that can be dealt with by a registered health professional will be dealt with by that registered health professional. But there are other procedures and other types of care that can be delivered by other people who are not registered health professionals,

as long as they are properly supervised and as long as they have the appropriate training and support. That will continue to be our approach. It has been the approach to date, and that will continue to be the approach.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what is the government's plan to provide proper support and training, should a member of a school's staff feel unqualified to administer prescribed medication or injections, and which directorate will be responsible for measuring competency and delivering training?

MR CORBELL: In many respects this question pre-empts the outcomes of the consultation process that is now underway between parents and—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members!

MR CORBELL: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, but the question was phrased prospectively and I am answering it in that context. What is very clear is that we need to work through these issues with staff, with students, with parents, and that is what we are committed to do.

Housing—public

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, the ACT government's transport for Canberra 2012-31 plan states:

For some areas on the fringes of suburbs (e.g. Chisholm) the circuitous street layout and hilly topography ... make it difficult to provide public transport within a reasonable walking distance of ... households, and make the car an easier travel option. Housing near transport corridors such as Northbourne Avenue has access to high frequency public transport.

Minister, how will relocating public housing tenants away from Northbourne Avenue to suburbs such as Chisholm, where it is difficult to provide public transport within a reasonable walking distance of households, make it easier for those people to access education and training?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. Through the housing renewal project that is going on right now in the ACT, to build new and better homes for over 1,200 Housing ACT tenants, part of the work that is happening, in the conversations that we are having with tenants along Northbourne Avenue, and in Bega flats initially, is to find places that would better suit their needs. It is looking at where they would prefer to live, whether it is closer to family, to community services or to shopping centres and schools. We are trying to find out what sort of housing meets their needs, rather than the needs of somebody like me.

If the housing needs of a tenant who lives along Northbourne Avenue mean that they would prefer to live in Chisholm because that is closer to their family or to schools or

shopping centres that they want to go to, public transport might not be of particular concern to that person. Those are the sorts of conversations that we are having with people who live along Northbourne Avenue and in the Bega flats and the BAC flats in the city. So it is not necessarily just about whether there are public transport routes in place; it is about whether the housing suits the needs of that tenant.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how will relocating public housing tenants away from Northbourne Avenue to suburbs where it is difficult to provide public transport within a reasonable walking distance of households make it easier for those people to access employment opportunities—or are you suggesting that they do not need employment, education or training opportunities?

MS BERRY: As I said in my answer earlier regarding the specific needs of tenants who live along Northbourne Avenue, whether the issue is to provide employment opportunities for them or to provide housing that better meets their needs if they are a person with a disability, we will be talking to those residents to find out where in Canberra best suits their needs. If they choose to live in Belconnen, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, Woden or Chisholm, that will be the choice that we will try to ensure that those people have.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, how will relocating public housing tenants away from Northbourne Avenue to suburbs where it is difficult to provide public transport or accessible community services within a reasonable walking distance of households make it easier for those people to access the services they need?

MS BERRY: In fact, in conversations that I have had with some of the residents in Owen flats in particular, along Northbourne, their preference has been to live in Belconnen so that they can be closer to family, closer to their own social networks and closer to schools where some of their grandchildren or children or friends attend.

Northside Community Service has been having conversations with residents in Owen flats—as well as me—and I know Ms Lawder has as well. We are taking into account what people's specific needs are, and we are trying to meet them as much as we can during the housing relocation process. If a person wants to live in Gungahlin, which has been another popular option, then we will try and meet those needs as much as possible. I am sure that the residents of Gungahlin will embrace new members entering their community through the public housing relocation program that we are embarking on.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, can you guarantee that no resident will forcibly be relocated to the Chisholm or Nicholls development?

MS BERRY: The conversations are still being had with those tenants, and those developments are still in the development application stage. We will be continuing to

have conversations, as we are, along Northbourne and with the BAC flats and other existing public tenants to make sure that the housing that they have is the housing that best suits their needs.

Crime—motorcycle gangs

Mr WALL: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, on 19 February 2015 the ACT Attorney-General, Mr Corbell, said, “The level of outlaw motorcycle gang activity here in the ACT is low.” A new bikie chapter has now established in Canberra, and since February this year there have been a series of violent incidents in Canberra suburbs allegedly involving Rebel and Comancheros bikie gangs. The media reports that bikie gang tensions are “reaching boiling point”. It is well documented that interstate bikie gangs have strong links with the manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs, including ice. Minister, now that the Comancheros have established themselves in the ACT, what have you done to deal with this increased outlaw motorcycle gang presence?

Ms BURCH: I thank Mr Wall for his question. Certainly the matter of outlaw motorcycle gangs is a concern to me and all members of this community. I am sure the Attorney-General, in his former role as the police minister, also had his eye to this. We are well aware that there has been an increasing presence of a second gang in this city, but I have been assured that the current activities are under close scrutiny by ACT Policing. The Chief Police Officer provides regular updates to me about that activity, and I have confidence in ACT Policing being well across what they need to do and keeping close surveillance on all persons of interest, so to speak.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, are extra resources in place to deal with this increased outlaw motorcycle gang presence?

MS BURCH: Mr Wall may be aware that—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear Minister Burch’s answer.

MS BURCH: there is a dedicated task force within ACT Policing that is looking at matters on outlaw motorcycle gang activity.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, have you had any advice that the increased outlaw motorcycle gang presence in the ACT has interstate organised crime links?

MS BURCH: I thank Mr Hanson for his question.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MS BURCH: I think the question is about whether I am aware that members of the outlaw motorcycle gangs may have—

Dr Bourke: A point of order.

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

Dr Bourke: The Leader of the Opposition described the minister as a puppet. I think that would be unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes. Can you withdraw, please.

Mr Hanson: Really? Okay, I withdraw calling the minister a puppet of Mr Corbell.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, just withdraw.

Mr Hanson: I did, Madam Speaker; I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: No; “I withdraw.”

Mr Hanson: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr Coe: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, I do note—

MADAM SPEAKER: I have made my ruling, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: I am seeking a new ruling from you then. The Chief Minister regularly calls members opposite “Muppets”. It is very similar to “puppets” in numerous ways. Therefore, you might like to add both words to the no-go list.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. It depends where the hand is, I suspect. I will keep that in mind next time the term is used. Before I call Minister Burch to answer the question on whether she had received any advice about interstate organised crime connections, Mr Hanson did ask a question and then started to interject. I found it difficult to hear the answer, so it would be good if we could actually hear the answer.

MS BURCH: It is my understanding that Mr Hanson was asking whether I was aware of or provided with advice that any activity or connection with outlaw motorcycle gangs in the ACT may have connections to people undertaking illegal activities in other states. I think that is a fair assumption. I think everyone on this side of the chamber would understand that to be the case.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, do you stand by, or do you agree with, the Attorney-General's view that the level of outlaw motorcycle gang activity here in the ACT is low?

MS BURCH: I do have confidence in the advice that the Attorney-General, as the then minister for police, provided to this community. We have become aware of increased activity and an increased presence by the Comancheros in town and outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop, please.

MS BURCH: As that activity increases, so, indeed, will our response.

Environment—climate change

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, what sorts of actions is the government taking to help tackle the issue of climate change?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her question. The government has a strong program to respond, as a city government and as a regional government for the territory, to ensure that, as a territory, as a city, we are driving down our own greenhouse gas, our own carbon footprint. Of course, we have legislated a 40 per cent by 2020 greenhouse gas reduction target. As a jurisdiction we are very focused on achieving the outcome set out in our greenhouse gas reduction legislation and we have committed, as part of that, as members would know, to the delivery of a 90 per cent renewable energy target for our city. That target is the key plank of a comprehensive program to drive down greenhouse gas emissions.

We have seen the latest advice from the UN's lead negotiator for the Conference of the Parties in Paris later this year, where nation states will come together to try and reach a binding international agreement to drive down greenhouse gas emissions and keep climate change within the scientifically accepted guardrail of no more than two degrees. Her advice to all Australian governments, both federally and state and territory, is very clear, and that is that the age of coal is over, that we need to drive down our greenhouse gas emissions and predominantly we need to do that through the decarbonisation of our electricity supply sectors.

So right here in the ACT we are putting in place policy measures that reflect that internationally accepted consensus and scientific position. And we are doing so in a way that helps create jobs and opportunity in the new innovation economy that is centred on low carbon technologies. The delivery of our 90 per cent renewable energy target is helping to drive investment and jobs in our local economy.

We also know that the target is starting to see results. It is starting to see results through an eight per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over the last two

years. Per capita emissions have peaked. They peaked in 2005-06 and they are now lower than they were in 1990. So Canberrans today have a lower carbon footprint than they did in 1990. That is a very significant achievement and one the government is determined to build on.

As to jobs, it is very well worth highlighting that we see new businesses growing their presence right here in the ACT. Let me just give you one example, and that is the local company Windlab. Windlab is the winner of the Chief Minister's exporter of the year award, a local business that is putting on more people here in Canberra, that is growing its corporate footprint here in Canberra. It is building its corporate footprint here in Canberra and it is running an anticipated investment, over the course of its feed-in tariff contract with the ACT government, of over \$250 million. That is the amount of return we will be getting back into our local economy because of our renewable energy policies—just for that one company.

I could also mention a range of other important issues, but the jobs and the environmental opportunities are plain to see. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, can you tell us why it was important for you to attend the climate change meeting in Adelaide with state and territory leaders earlier this week?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her supplementary. There was an important meeting earlier this week. I was pleased to represent the government. The South Australian Premier invited representatives from all jurisdictions to attend a meeting in Adelaide, both to discuss opportunities for state and city action on climate change and greater collaboration across jurisdictions and to hear from the executive director of the UN convening group on climate change negotiations, Christiana Figueres. She is the UN's lead negotiator for the Paris conference. She was able to address ministers from four jurisdictions and officials from others, including the commonwealth, who attended to discuss how states' and territories' actions need to be recognised in the Australian government's overall commitments that it takes to the Paris conference and also to discuss opportunities for collaboration.

I am pleased to say that out of that meeting there were some real and tangible steps that can give us greater opportunities to collaborate. The first is in the area of large-scale renewable energy, where ministers attending agreed to see how mechanisms like the ACT's large-scale feed-in tariff laws could potentially be developed in a more collaborative way across jurisdictions.

That is good news. If we can get results on that then we can see more renewable energy delivered in other jurisdictions, as well as here in the ACT, and more growth in that very important and growing part of the economy. It also means, of course, that we can overcome some of the significant barriers that have been created by the Liberal Party federally, due to their opposition to the renewable energy target, and the enormous uncertainty and lack of investment that that has led to. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

Dr BOURKE: Minister, how will the renewable energy industry development strategy help the ACT benefit economically from its efforts to help tackle climate change?

Mr CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary question. Last week I was very pleased to launch and unveil the ACT's renewable energy industry development strategy. This strategy is designed to drive investment in this very important part of the innovation economy. Over the last five years renewable energy jobs in the ACT have grown by 400 per cent, and we want to grow those jobs further. That is why I have released this strategy.

Our city has enormous strengths in renewable energy, innovation and research, whether it is the research undertaken at the ANU, the new renewable energy skills training centre being developed at CIT, or the spin-off and start-up companies like Windlab and others that are leveraging the opportunities from being in a jurisdiction that supports renewable energy.

I was very pleased to see a range of very significant corporate names lend their support to this strategy last week—companies such as Siemens and General Electric, ActewAGL; institutions like the ANU, CIT and the University of Canberra; venture capital firms like Australian Capital Ventures; and, of course, large-scale renewable wind energy suppliers like Vestas, as well as the government partners who are delivering renewable energy projects for us on the ground—companies like Neoen, RES, Solar Choice, Windlab, Zhenfa and FRV. All of these companies are lending their support to this industry development strategy, and that bodes very well for growth in jobs, growth in innovation and growth in investment as we seek to make Canberra a centre for renewable energy excellence.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you tell us more about the expression of interest process you launched today for up to 50 megawatts of new generation solar power and how this will help the ACT in its efforts to tackle climate change.

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary. The expression of interest process that I announced today is about looking at how we can deliver 50 megawatts of large-scale solar generation with storage capacity so that we can improve the security and reliability of supply as part of our 90 per cent renewable energy target. It is also about how we can leverage opportunities for innovation and jobs growth in our city.

The expression of interest process will invite industry to come forward to government and tell us what proposals they are looking at, what opportunities they believe exist to deliver large-scale solar with storage. Fifty megawatts is a significant commitment on the part of the government. That is more than double the size of the Royalla solar farm. To have it with storage will mean that we can dispatch electricity even when the sun is not shining, even when it is not a productive day or, most obviously, of course, when it is night-time.

We have significant opportunities that will come from this EOI. The government will use the EOI process to determine whether to proceed with a further reverse auction for 50 megawatts or, alternatively, give consideration to dealing directly with projects that are well advanced, well developed and ready to be deployed.

We will look very closely at those opportunities. We obviously want to continue to drive value for money for electricity customers. That is critically important. We also want to make sure that we get a significant contribution to our 90 per cent renewable energy target. And, finally, we want to make sure that there is investment—investment in our city, in our research institutions, in the corporate presence here in the ACT and in innovation businesses. Those are critically important, along with delivering on a 90 per cent renewable energy target that will help make Canberra a centre of renewable energy excellence.

Kangaroos—cull

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. I refer to the current cull of kangaroos in nature reserves across the territory. Has the minister received intelligence about potential efforts to disrupt the cull and what risks this may pose to contractors and TAMS property?

MR RATTENBURY: As members will know, in previous years there have been efforts to interrupt the cull. To this point in time there have been no injuries or significant incidents recorded. That has been as a result of the efforts that TAMS has put in place, by having rangers on duty in the locations where the culling is taking place and by seeking to make sure that the operation is undertaken in as safe a way as possible.

I mention that background because TAMS will be using similar strategies this year. Given that we have had no significant incidents in the past, we believe that those precautions will adequately do the job. In terms of specific intelligence, various groups have indicated that they will endeavour to interrupt the cull, as they have in previous years. But there are no specifics attached to that at this point in time.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what action have you taken to persuade protesters to behave peacefully and lawfully in their protests?

MR RATTENBURY: As I indicated in my first answer—and that is, of course, the problem with pre-prepared questions—TAMS have put a series of measures in place whereby notification has been given. There has been public notification that the nature reserves are closed to the general public for certain periods of the day. As I indicated in my first answer, rangers will patrol the locations, where required. Those are the measures that have been put in place. I have also indicated publicly that live firing is taking place at these locations and implored those who disagree with the cull to think carefully about how they protest, because we do not want to see anybody get injured or worse in the course of this operation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, have you received correspondence from the Greens party about discharging your ministerial responsibilities for this matter?

MR RATTENBURY: I will need to check the records for that. I am not aware of specific correspondence, although I am aware of the issuing of a press release on the matter.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what other actions have been taken to protect departmental assets in other locations, such as depots, from attack?

MR RATTENBURY: Unfortunately, last year we did see a number of incidents where people at least alluding to being opposed to the cull undertook significant levels of vandalism on TAMS assets. Those assets were not related to the conservation cull. So, on that basis, they were not effective in interrupting the cull. I have put my views on that on the public record. TAMS has put a number of security measures in place to seek to prevent a repeat of those incidents. I do not intend to go into the details of that, but I can assure members that TAMS has taken steps to seek to avoid repeat incidents.

Government—tendering arrangements

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, on 23 April tenders closed for the management of the Lakeside Leisure Centre. However, no information has been provided as to how many or who were the tenderers. The ACT government website states:

Details of tenders received will be available on Closed tenders page as soon as possible after tender closing (usually by COB on the day following tender closing).

Minister, can you explain why these details, almost two weeks later, have still not been made public?

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Smyth does give a correct account of the tendering process. In terms of why that information is not yet available, perhaps it has not been possible, given that it was indicated that it would be made available as soon as possible. Sport and Recreation Services have been very busy, as has been in the public domain, seeking to deal with the situation at the Civic pool. That has certainly been a point of focus. I am happy to seek some information and to come back later to give Mr Smyth an indication of when that information might be available.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, has the government sought further information from any of the tenderers?

MR RATTENBURY: I am not privy to that information at this point. Ministers generally are not the ones who conduct the tendering process. I am happy to seek clarification on Mr Smyth's question and provide an answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, when will the details be publicly available, and have all tenderers been told that their tender has been accepted?

MR RATTENBURY: I will seek advice and also provide that to the Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

Mr DOSZPOT: Minister, when will these details be publicly available?

Mr RATTENBURY: I refer to my earlier answers.

Children and young people—out of home care

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Children and Young People. Minister, following your launch of a step up for our kids, can you please inform the Assembly how the ACT government's out of home care strategy will strengthen high risk families?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. The aim of a step up for our kids is simple—to provide vulnerable children and young people with loving, safe homes and the support to lead productive lives. We want to do this either by reuniting children and young people with their birth families or by supporting them to develop new lives in nurturing families who are not their birth families. We want the best outcomes to be realised for all children and young people.

A particular focus is on stepping up for families who are at high risk of having their children enter care or whose children have entered care. Under the strategy, we are significantly increasing the resources and services to build the capacity of high risk families to care for their children. These tailored services will support parents to provide safe, nurturing environments for their children. We are focusing on assertive engagement with families to support parents to be actively engaged with services and supports, demonstrate that they are committed to addressing issues, and be willing to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their child to return home.

Placement prevention services will provide families with intensive in-home supports, practical family supports and mentoring and coaching for parents. This will allow more children to stay at home in the course of intervention.

Reunification services will provide supports to families where their child has entered care. Parents will receive intensive in-home practical support provided by skilled paraprofessionals. The aim of this is to see more children and young people safely reunited with their families in a timely manner.

We will further develop parents' skills by providing programs that focus on positive interactions between parents and their children to assist parents in learning how to recognise and meet their child's emotional needs and to constructively respond to children's behaviours.

We understand that issues experienced by families are often complex. To support families to step up for their children, they will need to be linked to other support services such as mental health, drug and alcohol support or NDIS disability services, so that they can receive the most appropriate support to get their lives on track. Families may be linked with better services networks such as the gateway service and the strengthening families program.

We will support new mothers with babies, through the expansion of the Karinya House facility. Through this expansion, we are investing in a new level of service, including a mother and baby unit which will provide supervision and support for up to three months. All mothers should have a chance to parent their child; and for those who are assessed as high risk parents, learning to care for a child in a supported environment can make all the difference. We want to keep families together and provide all the support we can to vulnerable families to make this happen. We will retain the flexibility to work with families for an ongoing period where they are fully engaged in services and working towards parenting their children at home.

We are undertaking a major reform of out of home care. I expect that through this reform we will begin to see significant evidence of change for children, young people and their families over the coming years. The pathway has been mapped out, and now it is time for us to take the first step and step up for vulnerable children and young people.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

Dr BOURKE: Minister, can you tell us more about how, under a step up for our kids, children and young people will benefit from the creation of a continuum of care?

Mr GENTLEMAN: A step up for our kids is a major step in providing supports that place children and young people at the centre of the care system. We have listened to our community and based our approach on sound research. One significant development is creating a system that is more stable and allows children and young people to be supported by the same service provider throughout their time in care. This stability is key to providing the environment for children to thrive.

The main aim of a step up for our kids is to keep or reunite children with their families. Where this is not possible, we will work to ensure children and young people have the stability, care and support they need to build their new lives. The groundwork for stability will be investment in permanency through legislative changes that reduce the time a child must wait before decisions about permanent placements can be made. We will continue to step up for young people as they approach 18 years, and the carer subsidy will continue until age 21, where appropriate, to support a young person's transition into adulthood.

To deliver these changes we will be transforming the role of the community service providers. These changes, which we will be ushering in through the current procedural process, will enable service providers to have a far greater role in supporting children and young people, requiring them to provide continuity of supports throughout a child's time in care.

The aim in a step up is to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage for the next generation of care leavers, providing them with a foundation for an independent and productive adulthood.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how will accountability and the effectiveness of out of home care be strengthened under a step up for our kids?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her supplementary question. A step up will strengthen accountability and transparency to ensure a high-functioning care system, improving the long-term education, health and participation outcomes for children and young people in care. A step up will transform how we support children in care. One major change is the increased role for community organisations to deliver services.

We will focus on additional investment to develop the capacity of the workforce to transition to a care system informed by traumatic experiences of children and young people. It places their needs at the centre. We have established an independent office of Human Services Registrar, who will be responsible for regulatory oversight of the sector, providing registration, monitoring and stronger quality assurance mechanisms. Our aim is to provide better life outcomes for children. We are asking service providers to step up and do just that by introducing outcomes based on contracts and performance incentives so that services will be focused on the needs of children and young people and make a real difference in their life path.

Governance arrangements have been enhanced with the establishment of the interim Children and Youth Services Council, which will provide me with independent and frank advice on the implementation of a step up for our kids.

We are further safeguarding the integrity of the system by establishing two independent advocacy and support services, one for carers and the other one for birth families. This will ensure that appropriate advice and support are available to people when they need it, at arm's length of both the government and service providers. We are building the framework to support a stronger, safer and more sustainable out of home care system to improve the outcomes for our community's most vulnerable children and young people.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how will the ACT government work with the out of home care sector to develop new skills and service models?

MR GENTLEMAN: A step up for our kids is an end-to-end reform representing a major departure from current practice. This requires significant cultural change for the sector and indeed for our community. A procurement process is underway for delivery of services under this strategy and we are already working extensively with the government and non-government sectors to develop an approach which, over time, will develop the skills and capacity of the sector.

We will upskill the sector to deliver appropriate therapeutic trauma-informed care and services. A tender process to procure training has just closed and we will roll this out over the next 18 months. This will deliver training to people who are engaged in the lives of children and young people in care, or at risk of entering care. Again, we have listened to the community and we will initially prioritise training for kinship carers, whose experience of coming into caring arrangements can be very different from that of foster carers. We will also include foster carers, government and non-government staff in the rollout of training to develop a common understanding of the impact of trauma and how this can be applied in practice. This training will build on the comprehensive program of workforce training and development that already exists.

We acknowledge the need for high level collaboration, joint governance and a shared focus on quality practice across the sector. Joint panels and arrangements will be established, bringing key stakeholders together to create a community of practice and support robust decision-making.

These changes go to the heart of providing our workforce and carers with the means to step up for vulnerable children and young people. I look forward to updating members on further milestones as we roll out a step up for our kids.

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

Legislative Assembly—unparliamentary language

MADAM SPEAKER: During question time Mr Coe raised a point of order about the term “Muppet”, which has not been used by anyone in this chamber today, as I understand. But for the information of the Assembly, on 10 December 2008 Mr Rattenbury ruled that the term “Muppet gallery” should be withdrawn, and it was. On 14 November 2007 Mr Berry ruled that “Muppets” was unparliamentary and should be withdrawn, and it was. The former Deputy Speaker on 7 August 2013 ruled that “old Statler and Waldorf up the back there” be withdrawn. For the information of members, the Muppets are well and truly covered in the procedures of this place, but I remind members that the ruling on whether something is unparliamentary depends on the context.

Supplementary answer to question without notice Housing—public

MS BERRY: I want to clarify that the development application for Nicholls has been extended to 8 May and the development application for Chisholm has closed.

Schools—nurses

Debate resumed.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (3.22): I move:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the Health Access at School (HAAS) pilot was designed to support students who have additional health care needs to attend ACT public schools;
- (b) the HAAS pilot is focused on the individual needs of students to access and participate at school which they otherwise may not have been able to attend;
- (c) the model includes a HAAS registered nurse (RN) who works with the family and others involved to develop a care plan for the student. The RN then trains the school Learning Support Assistant in the specific healthcare tasks required to support that particular student. These are often the same tasks that are undertaken by family members or carers when the child is not at school;
- (d) senior officials from ACT Health are working with their equivalents from Education and Training and three key unions to resolve the concerns that have arisen at Black Mountain Specialist School during the pilot;
- (e) ACT Health reinstated two RNs at Black Mountain School in Term 2 to further support families and staff transitioning to the HAAS program;
- (f) following the development of a care plan for a student at Woden School, nurses now attend the school once daily, in line with the agreed care plan arranged and agreed to by a paediatrician, a registered nurse and parents;
- (g) ACT Health is reviewing the needs of children in specialist schools in consultation with parents, teachers and health professionals; and
- (h) the review will consult with the Education and Training Directorate, parents, teachers, nurses and their respective unions to establish the level of need for medical supervision of children in Woden and Black Mountain specialist schools, and the level and make up of teaching and nursing staff required to support students in classroom settings; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Health to report back to the Assembly on the consultation by the last sitting day in August 2015.”.

The healthcare access at school program, HAAS, provides nurse-led care to students with additional healthcare needs while they attend ACT government schools. The

Education and Training Directorate has a commitment to the inclusion of all students in public education. HAAS is a sustainable model that delivers a more equitable match of resources to an individually assessed level of student need. In 2012 a pilot project was undertaken by ACT Health in collaboration with the ACT Education and Training Directorate to research national and international models of care that support the complex and/or invasive healthcare needs of students to enable them to attend school. This was in response to an increasing number of students with additional healthcare needs who attend mainstream ACT public schools as well as increasing and reasonable demands from parents for equitable access to an inclusive education for their children. The HAAS program was therefore developed in accordance with the Education and Training Directorate's students with a disability, meeting their educational needs policy and the disability standards for education 2005.

Following consultation with schools, parents, unions and the community in November 2012, the pilot HAAS program commenced in February 2013. The HAAS pilot is focused on the individual needs of students to access and participate in school, which they otherwise may not be able to do. HAAS, as I have said before, is a contemporary program. It is based on successful interstate and international models of school-based health care. South Australia has a similar model of care which has been in use since 1992, and Queensland has also commenced a similar model of care. As of 5 May this year 25 students on the HAAS pilot program are enrolled in nine ACT public schools. All HAAS eligible students attending Black Mountain School have been transitioned to the previous model of care.

The HAAS registered nurses provide ongoing support to school staff and families. However, they do not provide a telephone advice service or a hotline, as has been suggested by others. In the HAAS model of care, individual student needs are identified and assessed by a senior HAAS registered nurse, along with family and medical input. Following this, individual care plans are developed for each eligible student, and if the senior nurse and medical advice is that a learning support assistant, LSA, can undertake the level of care, the LSA can be trained by the nurse in the specific healthcare tasks required to support that student. These are often the same tasks that would be undertaken by family members or carers if the child was not at school.

The HAAS clinical nurse consultant, registered nurse and the HAAS consultant paediatrician use a validated risk assessment tool to assign the level of care required to meet the student's identified healthcare needs. This level of care could require a school staff member to be assigned on a one-to-one basis to a particular student or a school staff member to assist a student periodically during the day. In some circumstances a registered or enrolled nurse may be required to provide specific aspects of a student's care needs. The care plans for individual students also include details of how school staff should respond if they are concerned about the health of students. In some circumstances this will involve calling a nurse to provide further assistance. However, as in any emergency situation, it will sometimes be more appropriate to call an ambulance.

In the event that the care level recommendation made by the intake team is not consistent with the expectation of the student's family, it is elevated to the HAAS

review panel for further consideration and a final decision. This panel comprises the ACT Health medical director of paediatrics and the ACT Health Division of Women, Youth and Children manager of nursing services as well as a community representative. The HAAS registered nurse provides a link between the parents and the school. A communication pathway has been developed with each family to ensure that changes in health are communicated promptly to the HAAS nurse. This is designed to ensure that the healthcare plan will be updated and further training implemented, if that is required. In the event that changes in a student's health status are noted at school, the parents would be informed by the HAAS nurse.

ACT Health is aware of some concerns from the ACT Branch of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation and the Australian Education Union about the HAAS model. Senior officials from ACT Health are working with their counterparts from the Education and Training Directorate and three key unions to resolve the concerns that have arisen, with specific attention to some issues that have evolved at Black Mountain School during the pilot. With regard to Black Mountain School, two registered nurses were relocated following the introduction of HAAS. In light of some recent concerns, ACT Health has placed back two registered nurses within Black Mountain School for term 2 to further support families and staff transitioning to the HAAS program.

Prior to the HAAS trial arrangements, no special school nurse was dedicated to the Woden School, but there has been a nurse present during school hours to support an individual student. Following the development of a care plan for that student, nurses now attend the school once daily, or more frequently if required, in line with the care plan arranged and agreed to by a paediatrician, a registered nurse and the student's parents. An LSA supports this student at all other times, including observing the health of the student in line with the care plan. ACT Health will continue to work with the family should they wish to review this care plan.

Both government directorates are also working closely with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation to address issues as they arise. I take their concerns very seriously, including the concerns and complaints we have received from parents, teachers, nurses, carers and unions. That is why we are now reviewing this pilot. While several public consultations were held during the planning and implementation phases of HAAS in November 2012 and again last year, I acknowledge we need more consultation with parents, teachers, nurses and their respective unions to ensure the needs of everyone involved are properly and reasonably met.

There is general feedback from parents and agreement among directorate officers and representatives of unions that HAAS is working well for students with healthcare needs enrolled in mainstream schools. Therefore, I want to see a similar outcome achieved in our special schools. The HAAS pilot will continue to be adapted as the government listens, learns and responds to the concerns of students, their parents and carers.

Supporting students with additional health needs to attend school is a priority for ACT Health and for the Education and Training Directorate. The government will continue to work with families to provide quality learning opportunities for students who also

require assistance with health care while they are at school. We are committed to making sure children with special needs get the right type of clinical care and educational support they need.

I have moved an amendment which reflects the issues I have just addressed in my comments and, in addition, proposes that, as the Minister for Health, I report back to this Assembly by the last sitting day in August on the outcomes of the ongoing consultation and further engagement with students, their parents and carers, teachers, nurses, unions and other interested parties. That is my commitment. I will keep working with students, parents, carers and the professionals engaged—teachers, nurses and others—to make sure we get the best possible outcome. That is something I want to see achieved so that children with special needs are able to continue a thriving and full education.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3.32): I would like to thank Mr Doszpot for bringing this issue to the Assembly today. I know he is very passionate about it and has taken a long-term interest in it. I appreciate that the developments over the past few weeks have been led by some concerns from parents and the Australian Education Union, the AEU, and that the motion before us is current. But, as Mr Doszpot knows, this issue has a long history. The issue is the level of medical intervention required to support students with a disability to attend school and in particular to attend one of the four special schools in Canberra. As members may know, these schools are Woden, Black Mountain, Malkara and Cranleigh.

It is my understanding that there are currently nurses available to both Malkara and Cranleigh and there are no immediate plans to change this arrangement. I had assumed this was because the level of need at these two schools has been well established and the medical issues of the students are such that the health and education directorates have agreed to a permanent nurse presence. However, as we all read in the *Canberra Times* recently, the situation is different for the other two schools.

Woden, I am advised, has only had a nurse either placed on site or engaged for regular visits in the past few years for the needs of one specific student, and this was an issue passionately championed by Mr Doszpot. It is also my understanding, although I am happy to be corrected, that under the healthcare access at school program, HAAS, there has not been an identified need to have a nurse offer the same services beyond that student's unique and individual needs.

The Black Mountain School issue, however, is a little hazier. It appears that the HAAS program has been trialled in schools in the ACT for some time, and there was a communication with parents and teachers about the removal of two nurses or equivalent nursing services. However, concerns appear to have been raised, first privately and then much more publicly, that aroused enough issues that the decision was overturned within two months and the nurse reinstated. And now we are here debating the matters and the HAAS is being reviewed.

I do find all this process a little unsatisfactory. It seems to be a bit of chopping and changing. But I hope that through today's discussion we can get some clarity on what the situation is.

Going to the Education and Training Directorate website to look at the background of this, it says on there:

The School Youth Health Nurse aims to promote positive health outcomes for young people and their families through the delivery of accessible, acceptable, appropriate and culturally respectful primary health care in high schools.

They provide the opportunity for young people, their parents and members of the school community to access a health professional in the school setting. This can be for matters relating to health and well-being and includes acting as a curriculum resource for staff.

They help support school communities to adopt a whole-of-school ... approach to address contemporary health and social issues facing young people and their families. The goal is to enable young people to make a safe and healthy transition into adulthood.

These are all aims I am sure we can support and can see value in, particularly in mainstream education settings. But the issues of student safety, level of care, scope of practice and appropriateness of this in special schools seem to require more community discussion, review and evaluation to ensure they meet the mark.

Rather than support a motion that recommends nursing staff at every school no matter what, the Greens would prefer to take a much more focused approach of actually ensuring that we are meeting the needs of students and teachers in terms of providing support for children and young people who have medical needs. It seems nonsensical to actually provide a level of nurse staffing to a school and have that person underutilised and sit around twiddling their thumbs. It is also untenable that children with medical needs are not fully supported in their schools. However, that full support may take different forms depending on the medical needs, depending on the child, their age, their teacher and the risk associated with their conditions.

I am mindful that we need tailored solutions when we are planning for the care and education needs of any child. So I would prefer to see a model that assesses and ensures that each child's needs are being met, while not just assuming needs, than provide a level of staffing that is not required.

Going forward, what we need is a framework for special schools that stands the test of time, parental engagement, staff discussion and, most importantly, the changing needs of a student with a disability. What we do not need is this constant debate in the chamber of the Assembly on matters that relate to individual students' medical needs. We do need to be able to move beyond that.

I do believe that Mr Doszpot has the best interests of students at heart on this matter and I appreciate his longstanding commitment to people with disability. But I do not necessarily agree with him on the proposed policy approach that is in his motion today and I fear that it is perhaps taking a sledgehammer approach to a nuanced and complex issue.

What Mr Doszpot's motion does is reduce the individual needs of students to a baseline of medical intervention without any of the evidence that would usually go into establishing such an embedded program. Conversely, it would appear that the HAAS program is not yet robust enough to weather the front-page test and clearly requires some further work in its communication with stakeholders but perhaps also in its program integrity.

I agree with Mr Doszpot that parents and students need certainty and not a temporary plan, but I think we need a policy and procedure, not a simplistic one-size-fits-all response that fails to consider issues such as the best use of resources, a strength-based approach to individual planning and the ongoing registration of potentially four nurses and their practical skills needs in their careers.

I thank the Minister for Health for taking on board suggestions that the Greens have made to the amendment circulated in his name. We need to get some clarity on this issue and we need to include all the stakeholders in any review and further consultation. That is why, particularly now in his amendment, Mr Corbell has put forward a number of points. He has given background to the HAAS program, talked about what it seeks to deliver in the schools, and spoken about that in his remarks today.

Then, as we get further down to paragraphs (g) and (h), he starts to talk about the review. This is where I had some discussions with Mr Corbell—and I appreciate him taking on board some of those points—but it is important that the review work with and consult the Education and Training Directorate. We need a strong partnership between the Health Directorate and the Education and Training Directorate. We need to make sure that that is well defined and responsibilities are clearly understood.

We need parents involved. Parents need to have confidence that their child is getting the medical services that they need. Obviously the teachers need to play a role, the nurses need to play a role, and their respective unions need to be engaged so that we can have, right through the system, the confidence that we have got the right model in place to address the specific needs.

The motion talks particularly about Woden and Black Mountain special schools, where the concerns seem to be arising. The HAAS pilot has been operating for some time now and an important part of understanding where we are up to is evaluating the success or otherwise so far and actually knowing what the situation is. We need to know whether this pilot has delivered what it intends, so we do need clarity around that review and we need an evaluation of the success of the program.

Importantly, Mr Corbell's amendment also undertakes that the Minister for Health will report back to the Assembly on this consultation by the last sitting day of August 2015. I think, again, it is very important for this place to have a sense of transparency and have a point of accountability, because I know this is a contentious point. Change does produce debate and differing views on what the right model going forward is. But what having this report update does is give this chamber an opportunity to readdress, to reconsider this issue and to assess where it is up to, and for us to consider it again to make sure that progress has been made and that this Assembly can have confidence that the right model has been put in place.

I speak to those individual points because it is actually the substance of Mr Corbell's amendment that is important, and this is certainly what has shaped my view on this matter. I will be supporting Mr Corbell's amendment because I can best summarise my view on this matter by saying I agree with the intent of Mr Doszpot's motion, which is that we need suitable medical support and care for students in the school environment. We need to know that they will get the medical attention they need in a timely manner from somebody with the right skills. I absolutely agree on that. I do not necessarily agree that a full-time nurse is needed in each facility.

That is why I cannot support Mr Doszpot's motion. His motion specifically calls for permanent nurses in all the special schools. I do not know if that is the right model and I do not think it necessarily is the case. We need to determine the resourcing on an assessment of need—not on a particular delivery model but on an assessment of need. We need this to be a medical assessment—not the view of politicians in this place but a medical assessment of what we will deliver for the particular child in question.

I cannot agree to Mr Doszpot's motion today that simply says there will be this position in each of the schools. I am open to what is being done through the HAAS pilot. It says in paragraph (b) of the amendment:

... the HAAS pilot is focused on the individual needs of students to access and participate at school ...

It goes on to talk about developing a care plan for the student so that they can be in that school environment with their medical needs met. That is the basis on which I will not be supporting the motion Mr Doszpot has put forward today and I will be supporting the amendment, with that requirement that this Assembly will review this matter in a couple of months time. This Assembly will be able to look at the outcomes of the review and, hopefully, have some evaluative feedback on how the HAAS pilot has gone. At that point, again this place can have a point of accountability where the Assembly can have confidence, or not, that this is the right approach.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (3.44): I would only like to speak to Minister Corbell's amendment at this stage and to answer some of Mr Rattenbury's comments. Mr Rattenbury has just stated that he generally supports my motion but—I get this a lot of times from Mr Rattenbury and I wish he would get past the “but” point—he does not appreciate my sledgehammer approach. I do not know where he got the sledgehammer from. My point is very simple. In my motion I am calling on the government to do two very simple things. The first is to guarantee that all special schools will be quarantined from the healthcare access at school program, the HAAS program. Having said that, we are supporting the HAAS program.

In mainstream schools we have no objection to the initiative that is taken. We support that, but I think, having started something that was very ill prepared, there is enough evidence now from nurses, from teachers, from the nurses union, from the teachers union, that there is something flawed in the way that this task has been approached. So the first part of my call on the government is simply asking for a guarantee that all special schools will be quarantined from the healthcare access at school program because there is still a very serious concern in the community.

I keep referring to Mr Corbell's obfuscation and prevarication on these points. Even though nurses have been returned to these special needs schools—Black Mountain and, to a lesser extent, Woden—he still also refers to the fact that they may, of course, revert to the original position. I am not quite sure what the original position is or what the ultimate intention of Mr Corbell is. I doubt if he knows. But it is evident that there is enough feedback from the special needs community, from the nurses, from the teachers, from the parents, that this is not the way forward for special needs schools.

The second part of my calling the government to action is to reinstate permanent nurses to all ACT special schools, with at least two nurses at Black Mountain School and one nurse at Woden School so that students with complex medical needs are not put at risk. This is not something that I am mandating. I do not know where you got the sledgehammer idea from, Mr Rattenbury. What we are talking about is what existed prior to this HAAS pilot being started. There were nurses in every special needs school in Canberra at that point. You had two nurses at Black Mountain. You had one nurse at Woden. I believe there were two nurses at Cranleigh and one at Malkara.

I am not suggesting anything that did not exist before. I am simply calling on the government to go back to the starting position. There was no reason given why we have got to get all these nurses out of these schools. This is not the way to go. There was no consultation with the community on why this should happen to special schools in the first place.

Have a look at the impact it has had on people in our community. I hear from them, Mr Rattenbury. In fact we have here today, Ms Jenny Miragaya, the branch secretary—

Mr Gentleman: On a point of order.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Sit down, Mr Doszpot. I have not called on you yet, Mr Gentleman. Mr Gentleman.

Mr Gentleman: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. Standing orders require the member to address his comments through the chair. He has been addressing them straight to the member.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. I take pleasure in welcoming Jenny Miragaya and her colleagues from the Australian Nursing Federation whom I cannot claim to have consulted totally on this. But, from what I understand, the motion that I am bringing before this Assembly is in line—I do not want to put words into Ms Miragaya's mouth—

Mr Rattenbury: You are going to.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not, but thank you, Mr Rattenbury. People who are interested in and who are very much concerned with these issues are here in the Assembly listening to what we all are saying about this. This should not be a political scenario. We are talking about something that the community has clearly indicated that they need. The professionals in our community—the nurses, the teachers—have already spoken loud and clear but it appears that not everyone in this chamber is listening. Mr Rattenbury, you, of all people, tell me that you listen to the voice of reason—

Mr Gentleman: On a point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Sit down, thank you, Mr Doszpot. On a point of order, Mr Gentleman.

Mr Gentleman: Madam Assistant Speaker, the member continues to talk directly to another member in the chamber and should address his comments to the chair.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr Doszpot, please—

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Assistant Speaker, my profound apology to you and, I guess, to Mr Gentleman. I am sorry if, in the emotional point of this moment, I am addressing myself incorrectly. That is more important to Mr Gentleman than listening to what I am saying and listening to the community about what is really important. Get off your standing orders for a second, Mr—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, may I remind you to address your remarks through the chair.

MR DOSZPOT: I apologise. I will say one final thing about Mr Rattenbury's comment about a sledgehammer. I do not believe we are using a sledgehammer but we are trying to get the attention of these ministers, to get them to actually listen to what the community is saying. Mr Rattenbury said a sledgehammer; I do not agree a sledgehammer is being used by me.

But I will agree with one thing—that I have picked up the cudgel on behalf of the disability community and the education community. That is something that I have been asking Minister Burch to do, to pick up the cudgel, which she laughed at, because she did not understand the word “cudgel”. I have certainly picked up the cudgel that I have asked Ms Burch to pick up, and I intend to fight for the community both in the education sector and in the disability sector. This is one of those points that have been going on for five years. I am not going to give up, and I just wish Mr Rattenbury could see the light and listen to the people, some of whom are here in this Assembly now—listen to what the community really wants, instead of political expediency.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (3.52): It is with great pleasure that I speak to Mr Doszpot's motion today. I congratulate him on his tireless work on this issue. Mr Doszpot has been relentless in his pursuit of the government and of the minister on the

holding of serious complaints made by families that have been affected by poor decision making that continues here today. By way of this motion, Mr Doszpot is doing his best to ensure not only that the right and proper way is taken forward but that a good result is achieved for all.

It is imperative that nurses are the ones responsible for the healthcare needs of our young people in special schools. This is not the remit of teachers; nor should it be. From my perspective as the shadow minister for disability, I have seen firsthand, at special schools both in the ACT and in other jurisdictions, the importance of having specialist medical attention on hand for these students. We are not just talking about minor medical attention; we are talking about detailed monitoring of blood glucose levels, the changing of complexly placed feeding pegs, the management of seizures, and chronic pain management. These needs transcend what can be expected of a teacher or an LSA.

I have had many conversations with parents of children who attend these special schools who are not just outraged by the lack of attention being given to this very important issue by the current government but fearful of what could go wrong without adequate medical care for their children.

In one letter I received from a parent from Cranleigh late last year on the issue, she says:

This letter is written to convey the concerns of the Cranleigh School parents/carers regarding the ACT Health's new program Healthcare Access at School (HAAS). As Cranleigh School's P & C President and member of the school board, I am privileged to work with many families. I speak on their behalf as an advocate. My intention is to work with the government in meeting the needs of our community's children.

To say the parents/carers are in an uproar would be an understatement. A large number of Cranleigh students have complex medical issues with not just one, but several diagnoses, some of which are life threatening.

Duty of care, broadly paraphrased, states that teaching staff owe a duty to take care of the welfare and safety of the students. To leave the multifaceted, difficult and complicated care of Cranleigh students' health in staff's hands without proper medical training is quite alarming to parents/carers. Will the training rival that of a nurse's education? Will there be real life crises supervised by qualified staff to ascertain the new staff's emotional capability to deal with medical emergencies? Being from the USA, I know of a highly trained person—

trained under a similar program to the HAAS program—

who, when an emergency arose, folded under the pressure and this lack of action led to several months of hospital care for the person with the illness.

The letter goes on to say:

This is not an overstatement—some parents/carers fear that their child will die or become seriously ill if proper medical assistance is not at the ready.

This letter was written in October last year. The serious concerns of many parents were put forward to the government on numerous occasions. Again, we are seeing a blatant disregard for the community, as these views were not even remotely taken into consideration before this trial began. It must also be noted again here today that the views of teachers and their union were not listened to—yet another example of an arrogant government and an arrogant minister.

One of the main reasons parents of children with a disability choose to send their children to specialist schools is so they have specialist care. This care provides the safety net that parents of these children need.

Another example that must be again raised here today is one that was reported in the *Canberra Times* last month. The article states:

A mother of a 14-year-old boy at the school said that just two weeks ago her son had had a seizure which required his teacher to administer mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. “One of the main reasons I sent him to that school was because of his severe epilepsy and the fact that nurses would be available if he needed them. It made me feel at ease knowing the nurses were there,” she said.

This issue is not one that can be ignored. The facts remain. The government has trialled the HAAS scheme. It has met significant objection from families and teachers. I think it is fair to say that this trial has now failed.

The focus should now be on ensuring that a solution is found. Resources should be directed into reinstating permanent nurses in all ACT specialist schools so that our students with complex medical needs are not put at risk but enjoy a fundamental human right of being able to access education.

Again, I commend Mr Doszpot for his continued and tireless work in this area. I commend him for his motion today and for his careful, diligent and consistent consideration on this issue.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (3.57): I would like to start by commending Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion before the Assembly. To quote from Mr Rattenbury—he was off to a good start; I thought I was going to agree with most of what he said—Mr Doszpot has a passionate, long-term interest in this area. Unfortunately it went downhill from there, but at least we could agree at the outset with that. I would also like to thank Mr Wall for his comments. As is the case with many areas of policy, you will see interaction between people—between someone working in education, Mr Doszpot; in disabilities, Mr Wall; and in nursing, me. It is just the reality of the administration of government.

Mr Doszpot’s motion seeks clarity and assurance. There has been confusion in this area for some time now. For about five years, Mr Doszpot has been working very closely with the parents of children at the schools and, I understand, with the union to express what they need, what they want. Mr Wall just read an example from a parent and why they need this surety that the care will be provided.

Mr Doszpot has done the work. He has been active, speaking regularly to the people on the front line to find out what they want, what they need to provide for children in special schools.

This is not an area for cost cutting. In the Liberal Party, we want to make sure that we are providing for all the most vulnerable in our community—the children at these schools; this is who we are talking about; we want to make sure that the front-line staff are supported as well—and that the teaching staff in these environments, particularly, are not being called on to do something that is beyond their abilities.

If there is a concern from the government that we are being overly generous in some manner or we are providing support that may not always be needed, so be it. We think that this is a priority. We are committed to making sure that support is given to those who are vulnerable in our community and also to making sure that staff are supported. You will see more of this from the Canberra Liberals—listening to experts and making sure that we are putting resources where they are needed.

I will not belabour the point. I think the government's amendment is an improvement on where we are at today. It does not go as far as Mr Doszpot is calling for, so we will not be supporting the amendment, but I am glad—regardless, it would seem that the amendment has the support of Mr Rattenbury—that this issue is firmly and squarely on the agenda and that we will get an improvement in what is provided at these special schools. Importantly, it will provide clarity and support to those most in need. I again commend Mr Doszpot for his motion.

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) (4.01): I share with the Minister for Health and most in this room a keen interest in supporting the needs of students attending school. I share Minister Corbell's view that the healthcare access at school pilot, led by nurses and supported through doctors from ACT Health, with involvement from parents and families, offers a quality evidence-based way to meet the needs of a number of students in our public schools.

Dedicated teachers, school leaders and learning support assistants work together with parents and families to make our schools the best they can be for our students.

I recognise the work that ACT Health has put in to make the HAAS pilot available in a number of public schools. It is through the ACT Health pilot that we can support more students to attend school more often.

The pilot is designed to support students with additional healthcare needs to attend school. It targets the individual student's needs and provides an individual response to those needs. Members of the Assembly and the wider community know my background and that of Ms Porter, who is not with us today; we are both registered nurses and have worked as nurses for many years. I acknowledge the impact of nurses; the great work that they do cannot be overestimated.

What I see in the HAAS pilot is an approach that offers more targeted individual support in schools than nurses alone can offer. For me, this is the real strength of HAAS. It is nurses, allied health professionals, medical professionals, schools, parents and families working together for students. This is the community coming together in our schools. The pilot has students at the centre of the approach and recognises the inputs of families and medical specialists. It is a good model for providing the care needed in schools.

Schools are places of learning; they are not a healthcare setting. Students in HAAS need care for routine health conditions; they do not necessarily need the care of a skilled registered nurse. This is a vital distinction that appears to be lost in some of the reporting. When healthcare professionals and parents agree that a nurse is required for a student to attend school, ACT Health makes the arrangements for that to happen. Teachers and other school staff are not experts in determining the medical needs of students, but nurses and healthcare professionals are. This is why HAAS works.

It is perfectly reasonable—in fact, desirable—for ACT Health to lead the approach in providing support for the healthcare needs of students in schools. It is the healthcare professionals who have the knowledge and expertise to make decisions about who can support routine healthcare needs for students. As I think Mr Rattenbury has articulated, it is not for us here to make those final decisions; it is the domain of healthcare professionals. I can say that if a skilled, experienced nurse advised me that a school assistant with the right training could provide for my child's needs in attending school, the same care that I would provide at home, then I would accept that advice.

The HAAS pilot has been informed by national practice and international evidence. ACT Health has taken heed of that evidence base. These are the healthcare professionals who know the tasks that can be performed by school staff at schools. They are the same tasks that are often performed by parents and carers when the students are not at school. The Education and Training Directorate has been working and will continue to work with this review to make sure we get this right.

Nurses design and implement training for school staff and coach them in specific tasks. It is my understanding that learning support assistants take up that training and provide that within their existing scope of practice.

I will take the opportunity to clear something up today in relation to accuracy in recent commentary, and Mr Corbell went to this too. HAAS is not a telephone hotline. To call it that undersells the contribution of families, nurses and other healthcare professionals in this pilot, and it fails to recognise the training afforded to school staff and their skills in meeting the needs of our students.

There are 24 students participating in HAAS across 86 public schools, including a number of students at Black Mountain and Woden. Seven students attend their local school because of HAAS; this is an excellent outcome for those families and for those schools.

Mr Doszpot made reference—again, misinformation—to an article or comments made, I believe, by Glenn Fowler of the AEU that implied that the learning support assistant contracts were ended or that the people were no longer employed at Black Mountain School. I have been advised by the Education and Training Directorate that no school assistant at Black Mountain has lost their job or had their contract revoked. Further, the school assistants who were involved in supporting the HAAS trial run by ACT Health at Black Mountain School continue to work at the school now that the nurses have returned. I want to clarify that and ask that Mr Doszpot not continue to put that misinformation out there, because it unnecessarily increases the concern for some families involved.

As I said, seven students attend their local schools because of HAAS. This is an excellent outcome for families in those schools. Families value HAAS. I will quote from one of those families, a parent who shared their story with me. This is their story:

Before the HAAS Program was established and implemented we felt like our options for our son and his future were very limited.

Our son now attends a mainstream primary school. The Learning Support Assistants have been trained in [his] individual healthcare needs. They are supported through HAAS with ongoing training and support provided to them by a Registered Nurse. This has gone a long way toward supporting [his] needs and normalizing his school experience. It has allowed us to continue expanding our visions for him.

The parent goes on:

I will never forget the first time my son spoke at the school assembly that was being run by his class.

Having my son at his local school not only enriches our experiences as a family by allowing us to stay connected with our local community but it also allows our son to attend the same school as his older brother, strengthening their connection.

Our son's presence at the school and inclusion in all school-wide activities enriches the school community by promoting understanding and acceptance among today's children, who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

And this from another family last year:

Last term was a fantastic start to high school for our son. While he didn't attend any full days, he still managed his best attendance since mid 2012 and really enjoyed being at school.

And this, from a school, about working with ACT Health:

Thank you so much for this—We are really grateful for all the time and effort you have spent in engaging with [a parent].

ACT Health and ETD will continue to consult on and review the HAAS pilot. It is a sound pilot, a pilot that offers opportunity and support for students in mainstream schools and in special schools. I am confident that with ACT Health and the education directorate continuing their work, we will continue to make sure that this pilot and this program succeed.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.10): I will now sum up. Before I do so, can I say that I cannot quite believe Ms Burch. The best way I can describe it is that she is the gift that keeps giving. I do not have to keep talking about her lack of understanding of her policy area. We have been saying all afternoon, and all morning, that we support the HAAS trial in mainstream schools. Ms Burch spent at least half of her response to this important motion trying to convince me of something that I have already said that we support. Ms Burch—through you, Madam Assistant Speaker—for the umpteenth time, we support the trial that is being conducted in mainstream schools. We do not support the special needs schools being part of that. I am not sure whether you understand it now, Ms Burch, but that is our stance.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Lawder): Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Through you, Madam Assistant Speaker. In my seven years in this place, I have seen some low points, where political expediency overtakes genuine concern for the community, the community's needs and expectations. The current amendment from the Minister for Health, Minister Corbell, takes the cake for its ignorance of what our community needs and has expressed clearly and strongly for the last few weeks. The community has every right to think that a health minister would understand and respect the wishes—and in this case that the education and health ministers would understand and respect the wishes—of the special needs community. Ms Burch is the minister for education and the minister for special needs. I think she misses every opportunity to prove just how strongly she supports both of those portfolios.

This government should be ashamed of itself regarding its current stance. The amendment that Minister Corbell has brought before us is a disgrace and an insult to the Canberra special school community. It is clear that Ms Burch is still taking a hands-free approach and has no clue as to what the current education policy is in regard to health requirements, let alone what this motion is about.

Minister Corbell is still creating confusion, and this is what we have been talking about for days. Children with special needs need to have some consistency. One of the biggest issues we have in special needs schools is that the children need consistent approaches. Children with autism need to be addressed in a certain way. They do not like to get away from what they see as certainty. The certainty in their health care has been taken away for quite a while, for ill-informed reasons. I will not say it was ill-intentioned; I am sure the intentions were good. Certainly, having regard to the preparation to get this pilot underway, there needs to be a lot of re-examination as to why it was done in the way it was done.

Minister Corbell's creation of further confusion does not help the situation at all. Judging by the questions in question time on education policies and health issues, I do not think the ministers themselves know.

Going to the amendment that Minister Corbell brought before us, it is a whitewash. It talks about how good the HAAS is. There is no argument about the HAAS. We support the HAAS pilot. The second last point in Minister Corbell's amendment states that ACT Health is reviewing the needs of children in special schools, in consultation with parents, teachers and health professionals. You would think that this would have been the very first step to be taken, eight or nine months ago, before a HAAS pilot was even considered. You would think that they would have consulted. But, no; they started the project and then, when nurses went public very strongly—because obviously the ministers were not listening to them—all of a sudden they realised, “We didn't think of this. We didn't think of that.” All of a sudden there was a backflip, the nurses were put back into special schools and now the minister is saying, “We will conduct a review and have consultation with parents, teachers and health professionals.”

In the last point in the amendment he says that “the review will consult with the Education and Training Directorate”—hooray!—“parents, teachers, nurses and their respective unions to establish the level of need for medical supervision of children in Woden and Black Mountain specialist schools, and the level and make-up of teaching and nursing staff required to support students in classroom settings”. That amendment could have provided a great set of criteria for looking at putting HAAS in to the schools—before you put something in, not finding out six months later whether that is what you should have done.

We have a clear motion before the Assembly. I believe the motion has the support of the majority, if not all, of the community in the special needs area. We are asking this government to guarantee that all special schools will be quarantined from the healthcare access at school program. We are hearing that loud and clear. We are also asking on behalf of the community for the reinstatement of permanent nurses to all ACT special schools, with at least two nurses at Black Mountain School and one nurse at Woden, so that students with complex medical needs are not put at risk.

We are not asking for this as a brand-new thought bubble that we have come up with. This is something that actually existed before the government took it away. I am gobsmacked that this is not getting through to the ministers. A mistake has been made. Everyone can make a mistake; they can recover from it. But, no; Mr Corbell has compounded it. He has now come up with this amendment that has umpteen “notes” and which is all window dressing and a whitewash of what they have done. He wants me to change my motion so that it reads, “The Minister for Health to report back to the Assembly on the consultation by the last sitting day in August 2015.” Shame on you, Mr Corbell. This is ridiculous. You are talking about making parents deal with a whole range of issues that they currently find very hard to contend with. You now want us to agree with you, to compliment you on your amendment, to delay the process and to keep this uncertainty in the community growing, instead of addressing issues that are easily addressed.

I do not think there is anything more that I wish to add. I said at the end of my presentation of this motion that I commend the motion to the Assembly. I say once again that Mr Barr could play a very big part in this. I have called on Mr Barr a number of times to follow the example of his predecessor, Katy Gallagher, when she was Chief Minister and health minister, who saw the flaw in the system regarding nurses in special needs schools. The only special needs school that did not have a nurse was Woden. Ms Gallagher saw the inequity in that situation. She stepped in, Chief Minister, and changed that. And for once in a long time we had nurses in every special school. Minister Barr, you have the opportunity—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, I have reminded you repeatedly to address your remarks to the chair, not to the MLAs opposite.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Assistant Speaker, through you, Mr Barr, the Chief Minister, has the opportunity to look at the situation. He must understand that we need to get some sanity regarding the changes that have been promulgated by the current Minister for Health and the current minister for education. Through you, Madam Assistant Speaker, Minister Barr needs to bite the bullet on this issue and, at the very least, support the motion that we have moved. We cannot support the amendment, for all the reasons I have mentioned. (*Time expired.*)

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch

Mr Corbell
Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Drugs—policy

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.23): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the use of the drug ice (crystal methamphetamine) is having a huge impact in Australia and the ACT is not immune;

- (b) children in Canberra as young as 13 are among the growing number of young people abusing ice;
 - (c) the Ted Noffs Foundation stated “two years ago, the presentation of ice doubled for young people, and last year it doubled again”;
 - (d) there has been a 52 per cent increase in the number of drug dealing and trafficking charges in the ACT;
 - (e) the Salvation Army has described treating ice patients as terrifying with some suffering from psychosis inside their drug treatment centre in Fyshwick;
 - (f) the Salvation Army Recovery Services in Canberra advised that more young people had sought treatment for ice addiction than for alcohol or cannabis abuse;
 - (g) the response to the increasing impact of ice requires a whole of government approach encompassing education, treatment, rehabilitation, community services, law reform and policing;
 - (h) any response should be coordinated with the Federal Government and NSW; and
 - (i) the Federal Government recently announced a taskforce to deal with the drug; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to develop a whole of government response to tackle ice in the ACT, and table the strategy in the Assembly by the last sitting day in August 2015.

Crystal meth, methamphetamine—it has a variety of names on the street, Mr Coe informs me—is an inexpensive, highly addictive central nervous system stimulant that can be injected, snorted, smoked or ingested orally. Ice users feel a short yet intense rush when the drug is initially administered. The effects of ice include increased activity, decreased appetite and a sense of wellbeing that can last for up to 24 hours.

The federal justice minister, Michael Keenan, stated that ice is now the number one problem in terms of illicit substances. He also said the ice problem requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response. Health experts, educators, police, community leaders and, importantly, parents all have a major role to play. Increases in ice use have been attributed to the drug’s highly addictive capacity and its easy accessibility. The Australian Crime Commission’s chief executive, Mr Chris Dawson, said that of all illicit drugs, crystal meth, or ice, is the most dangerous and has the highest risk to our nation. Mr Dawson also said:

We are seeing weekly and daily homicides, drug-impaired driving, addict-based crime in the form of aggression, violence and other crimes such as burglaries in which organised crime groups are profiting.

Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Lucinda Nolan has said an explosion in the number of people using the highly addictive drug ice has had a big impact on crime rates in recent years.

It is important to note that ice is easily produced in clandestine labs which range from crude, makeshift operations using simple processes to highly sophisticated operations using technically advanced facilities and equipment. Manufacturing in clandestine labs has resulted in explosions which have severely damaged properties and resulted in serious injuries and deaths. These labs are often located in residential areas, therefore posing a significant threat to the community from the corrosive and hazardous chemicals used, plus the toxic gases produced, which are extremely dangerous and pose severe health risks.

Meth labs can be portable and easily dismantled, stored and moved. The ease of moving labs makes it easier to evade detection. Meth labs are found in all types of localities, such as homes, apartments, garages, back sheds, hotel rooms, rented storage spaces, cars, vans, trucks and boats. Children of meth addicts may be neglected and are often found living in dangerous and unsanitary conditions. These children face the risk of injury and abuse, given the addict's tendency towards paranoia, aggression and violence. Children whose parents operate meth labs are often subject to even greater risk due to the contamination, the potential for fire or explosions and, in some cases, the presence of weapons.

Ice addiction often involves repeated and prolonged use over days or weeks in phases of binges, physical and psychological difficulties, resulting in feelings of aggression with tendencies towards violence, paranoia, anxiety and hallucinations. In many cases, the user may become belligerent, delusional and highly dangerous. The problem with ice as well is that it poses risks to front-line law enforcement and healthcare officers as well as the family and friends of drug users or manufacturers. Ice users are often more likely to demonstrate violent behaviours, including assaults, sexual assaults and so on.

We know that front-line staff, including police and health staff, are regularly confronted by out of control ice addicts. These incidents have placed significant demands on our healthcare system, which treats both users and victims of aggressive and violent behaviour. Former Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Graham Ashton has said the violent behaviour often associated with ice use also leads to increases in family violence, road trauma and other violent crime.

If that is not bad enough, according to the Ted Noffs Foundation, children as young as 13 in Canberra are among the growing number of people abusing ice. The foundation also stated two years ago that the presentation of ice doubled for young people, and last year it doubled again. Former Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner Graham Ashton has also said it is clear an entire generation of rural youth is at risk, threatening future prosperity in those communities. We do not want that happening here in the ACT. He also revealed that bikie gangs and overseas criminal syndicates are taking advantage of the highly addictive aspect of ice to actively hook thousands of young Victorians. He said that one in five ice users arrested by police committed a violent crime.

This sends a warning to us. On 11 November 2014 the *Canberra Times* reported that the targeting of high-end drug dealers in Canberra has led to a jump in the number of dealing, manufacturing and trafficking charges. There was a 52 per cent increase in the number of drug dealing and trafficking charges in the ACT in the financial year 2013—102 dealing and trafficking charges were laid compared to 67 in the previous 12 months. There has also been a 33 per cent jump in drug manufacturing and drug charges in the ACT, with 32 charges laid in 2013-14 compared to 24 in the previous year.

The ACT's leading drug body has called on the ACT government to develop a more nuanced response to increased ice usage and its associated harms. The ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association has reported a rapid and profound shift from powdered amphetamines to the more harmful crystal meth. ATODA reported there has been a 36 per cent increase in demand for non-government drug treatment services in the ACT, which has been exacerbated by the rising of methamphetamine-related harms in our community. The ATODA chief executive, Carrie Fowlie, said the number of drug treatment admissions with amphetamine as the primary drug of choice more than doubled between 2010 and 2013, a trend reported across the nation. She said methamphetamine users experience different harms from other users and there are no specialist treatments currently available in the ACT.

Since ATODA's establishment in 2010 the ACT budget has not included explicit funding for non-government specialist drug treatment. Similar investments in non-government services have not been made, and 90 per cent of ACT specialist drug treatment organisations are non-government. Non-government services are essential and equal partners in treating drug problems in the ACT. For years non-government services have endeavoured to proactively and positively develop their services within existing resources. However, they are no longer able to cope with increased demand and the complexity of ice usage that I have described previously in my speech.

Major Scott Warrington, who runs the Salvation Army's drug treatment centre in Fyshwick, has described treating ice patients as terrifying, with some suffering from psychosis inside the facility. He said:

People on ice have a higher capacity to do something horrible like commit murder or carry out on some deep-seated resentment from their earlier family life.

The Salvation Army recovery services in Canberra advise that more young people have sought treatment for ice addiction than alcohol or cannabis use. Disturbingly, the ACT has the lowest number of rehab providers in Australia, according to the Productivity Commission, and many have spoken out to the *Canberra Times* in recent months about the difficult situation they are trying to operate in. Karralika runs one of Canberra's main residential rehab programs, the Karralika therapeutic community, which currently has a wait of two to three months. The Karralika program's chief executive, Camilla Rowland, said occupancy rates were higher than they had ever been and every drug user in its service now lists methamphetamine as one of the drugs they are trying to beat. She said the number of people seeking treatment for methamphetamine has doubled in the past few years.

ABC news reported that Major Brendan Nottle of the Salvation Army said ice had had a big impact on people living on the streets or in poverty. He said:

Some of the most vulnerable people in the community that we've been working with have been deeply affected by ice.

Julie Tongs from Winnunga Nimmityjah says she has to call police once a fortnight to help a client:

Some days it's very chaotic here when we have got people in the waiting room that are affected by ice and are psychotic.

There is a significant financial cost as well of providing law enforcement, prosecution, child protection services, treatment and health care, along with the social and human cost to victims' families, neighbours and communities. There is no question that ice is a growing and insidious problem in our community and that resources allocated to tackle ice are under enormous strain in our community. We need an approach that is multifaceted. It must be an approach that covers education, treatment, health, rehab, community services, law reform, policing and greater community awareness.

Governments across Australia are strengthening their ice responses through the use of various initiatives including drug courts, sentencing offenders to treatment and rehab programs and so on. Indeed, the Victorian government had a parliamentary inquiry into ice and released a state-wide action plan in March 2015. Their plan has six objectives which closely align with the themes of the inquiry. They have a focus on prevention and early intervention programs, initiatives and resources that promote resilience and reduce risk; a strategy to reduce supply and manufacture and distribution of ice by enhancing Victoria's drug laws, ongoing collaboration with other jurisdictions, ensuring effective control of supply of chemicals and responding to organised crime; a strategy to reduce the impact of ice on individuals, families and communities through support for early intervention and drug treatment services, information and support for families, effective justice responses to ice-related crime and initiatives to protect the community from drug driving and ice-related violence; an objective to build workforce capacity by addressing occupational violence and providing added training supports for front-line workers; an objective to work together for better outcomes by facilitating local community action and supporting tailored responses that support the needs of diverse communities; and an objective to strengthen the evidence base.

We know the federal government has recently announced a task force to deal with this insidious drug. We know New South Wales has been active. Indeed, New South Wales Police Force Commissioner Andrew Scipione said Australia was facing an epidemic of ice addicts similar to that in the US. He said to suggest we do not have the problems everyone else has is just naive. The federal parliament is currently conducting an inquiry into ice because of the nature of the problem, and I will go through some of that when I sum up, if I have the time.

My point in bringing this motion to the Assembly today is to highlight the nature of the problem. It is a significant problem and it is a growing problem. The government's response needs to be multifaceted. It cannot just be law and order; it cannot just be help: it needs to be coordinated and it needs to be whole of government. I am glad to see the Chief Minister is responding to this, and hopefully he acknowledges the requirement for that whole-of-government response. We need to know what the strategy is. We need to know how it is synchronised within the ACT so that community providers know exactly what is going on, along with government agencies. We need to know how it is synchronised and coordinated with New South Wales, given that we are an island within New South Wales, and coordinated with the federal government.

My motion calls on the government to develop that strategy. I am sure much of that work is being done already, but it needs to be put together as a strategy; it cannot just be piecemeal. It needs to be coordinated and it needs to be made available to the community so that everybody understands what is going on.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (4.39): I thank Mr Hanson for raising this matter today. As his motion acknowledges, this is a national problem and one that is already being addressed through the National Ice Taskforce established by the Prime Minister, with the support of all state and territory leaders. The task force is an important and timely response. At the Council of Australian Governments meeting last month, we heard how ice is affecting communities, from the largest of our cities to the most remote parts of our country.

I have amendments to Mr Hanson's motion that are intended to better capture the important work that is already underway in the territory. I move:

(1) After paragraph (1)(i), insert:

“(j) the ACT Government invests approximately \$16.4 million annually in treatment and support services (residential and non-residential rehabilitation programs, withdrawal management, counselling, information and education, support and case management, pharmacotherapy, sobering up shelter and drug diversion program) and the Commonwealth approximately \$3 million in the ACT.”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the Government to maintain its support for a national approach to tackle ice, and use the findings and actions from the National Ice Taskforce and the recently announced Victorian Ice Action Plan to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response to ice use in the ACT.”.

The government also considers it necessary to closely align with the national response as agreed by COAG, as well as benefit from the rollout of Victoria's recently announced ice action plan, to ensure, as Mr Hanson alluded to, that our efforts are effective and coordinated. Assembling a response to an arbitrary deadline without

input from these important initiatives would likely create inefficiencies at best or be counterproductive at worst. Having said that, I think it is important that this matter be raised and debated in the Assembly.

We must also pay particular heed to the first responders, who have to deal with the consequences of uncontrollable or violent people suffering from the effects of ice usage.

Currently, the estimate is that the population rate of methamphetamine use in Australia is about 2.1 per cent. However, its effects are more widely felt than this statistic may indicate. We know that ice is becoming the preferred form of methamphetamine being used. We also know of the increased purity of the drug and the frequency of use. This suggests that we need to directly tackle the issue of ice use in our community and continue to refresh our approach.

People who are using monthly or more often have a rate of mental health diagnosis four to seven times that of the wider community. For some people, use is associated with violence and psychotic behaviour and can have a series of flow-on adverse impacts on their families and the broader community.

People who use, and their families, need to be provided with access to information, support and treatment. It is important that advice and interventions are available in locations where users will access them and in ways that will work for them.

The current ACT government response reflects these requirements. We currently invest approximately \$16.4 million annually in specialist drug treatment and support services. The commonwealth provides a further \$3 million towards these efforts. These funds support education, counselling, support and case management, withdrawal management, and residential and non-residential rehabilitation programs. Ninety per cent of these services are delivered by non-government service providers. ACT drug treatment and support services are reporting an increase in the number of people presenting with methamphetamine problems.

ACT Health has recently funded a one-off investment in accredited training to ensure front-line workers in ACT drug treatment and support services are confidently able to respond to those presenting for treatment. Sixty workers from specialist ACT drug treatment and support services will undertake this training in coming months.

We take a harm minimisation approach. From a policing perspective, it is focused on supply reduction. It is clear from the Australian Crime Commission's national report that organised crime is taking advantage of a profitable illicit market. ACT Policing is taking specific measures within its national law enforcement partner agencies to dismantle and disrupt trafficking in illicit drugs.

As I mentioned earlier, last month the Prime Minister announced the establishment of the National Ice Taskforce to develop a national strategy to tackle the growing national problem. The task force will be led by the former Victorian Chief Police Commissioner, Ken Lay. The ACT is a strong supporter of this initiative, which was discussed with the Prime Minister and other first ministers at the COAG meeting last month.

Ice use has both local and national dimensions, and it is clear that all Australian governments need to work together to tackle it. The work of the task force will therefore have input from all commonwealth, state and territory governments, through senior officials in first minister departments, along with health and law enforcement agencies. The national strategy will address a range of interrelated issues such as prevention, education, health, community and family support, and law enforcement, building on commonwealth, state and territory efforts to date.

An interim report is expected to be provided to the Prime Minister in June. This report will outline the nature of the problem across the country, outline what jurisdictions are currently doing, identify where gaps are and propose a way forward. A final strategy is due to be considered by COAG before the end of calendar year 2015.

To inform the work of the task force, a range of community consultation mechanisms will occur. An online public submission process has opened, through the national ice strategy website, to ensure all have the opportunity to provide input. This website remains open until 20 May. The task force will hold seven community discussions with key community stakeholders in rural, regional and remote areas, given particular concern in these areas.

In the ACT, we will continue to monitor our efforts to ensure they remain targeted and effective. The ACT alcohol, tobacco and other drugs strategy is a whole-of-government strategy across all drug types. The overarching approach is to focus on the three pillars of harm minimisation: supply reduction, harm reduction and demand reduction. The next iteration of the ACT government's strategy is being finalised this year. Again, we will be working with all states and territories, as well as the commonwealth, as part of the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs, on the national drug strategy and supporting the work of the task force.

One of the challenges in providing services to people who use ice is that they may not disclose their use to their GP—or indeed any health professional—and probably will not voluntarily present for treatment services. Making sure that people do not feel stigmatised, that they feel they can approach treatment services without being judged, is clearly very important. Treatment is available, and it does work.

Being a small jurisdiction with porous borders, we need to ensure that a collaborative approach is being taken across all states and territories to ensure that those who seek to exploit vulnerable Australians are not able to take advantage of any loopholes or inconsistencies. We also need to ensure that our police can effectively tackle the makers and suppliers of this drug—that their manufacturing process is disrupted, suppliers are identified and convicted, and we get as much of this noxious chemical off our streets and away from vulnerable people as possible.

This is the government's focus. We will continue to closely align with the actions of the commonwealth and other jurisdictions.

I commend the motion, with my amendments and the one I understand is coming from Minister Rattenbury, to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.48): It is timely that Mr Hanson brings this motion forward to the Assembly, as it gives us an opportunity to discuss what is both a very topical and very consuming issue, and one that has received quite some coverage in recent times. With the recent announcement of the federal government's national task force on ice, and with other jurisdictions also developing strategies, it is quite appropriate that the Assembly should have this discussion.

I agree with many of the comments already made about ice—which, as others have noted, is the crystalline form of methamphetamine. This is clearly a drug that can be extremely damaging for individuals and families. Beyond this, the negative impacts of ice are felt right across the community, impacting people such as healthcare workers, ambulance officers, police officers and, quite specifically, Indigenous communities, who have voiced that methamphetamine use and its consequences are of particular concern.

I recall a *Canberra Times* feature story about Canberrans who had used ice and the impacts it had on their lives and the lives of those around them. It told the story of Sarah, who was spending \$500 a week on ice supplied by her former partner and who lost access to her children. Most mothers would do anything to be with their children. Chloe said she had lost contact with her children due to the drug. She said:

I don't think my son will even like me, because I've hurt them so much, emotionally ... I almost lost my mind, and if it wasn't for places like the Adult Mental Health Unit at Canberra Hospital, I'd be bat crazy.

Another recovering ice user, Mark, said:

With my addiction I started gambling a lot and I didn't care, but afterwards I had guilt. I could be up \$20,000 on a night and it wasn't enough.

There is increasing evidence regarding the link between the use of ice and family violence. This was described in the Australian Crime Commission's report on ice released in March, called *The Australian methylamphetamine market: the national picture*. The report said that ice users are more likely to demonstrate violent behaviour and aggression, including domestic violence and sexual assaults. These crimes, which, as we have discussed before, are largely perpetrated against women, are already a major problem in the ACT and in broader society. If we are able to tackle these problems holistically, addressing ice is another factor to consider in the puzzle.

The Australian Crime Commission report released recently discussed several other harms of ice. It said that many studies have found a correlation between methylamphetamine use and psychosis, including a recent Australian study concluding that users of crystal methylamphetamine were five times more likely to suffer psychotic symptoms while taking the drug than when they were abstinent.

Even the manufacture of ice, in clandestine laboratories often located in or near residential communities, poses a danger. It can often cause explosions, as Mr Hanson noted, and can emit harmful chemicals. The report says that a clandestine laboratory manufacturing methylamphetamine generates up to 10 kilograms of hazardous and

toxic waste for each kilogram of pure methylamphetamine produced. Toxic chemicals and residues have been found dumped into drains, into rivers, into public parks, on roadsides and in sewerage systems, posing immediate and long-term environmental health risks. Members may recall that a person accused of operating a drug manufacturing laboratory in Hume earlier this year was found out because suspicions were raised from strong chemical odours emanating from the sewerage.

It is clear, I think, to all of us that ice is a problem that needs a concerted, dedicated response. The difficult question, of course, is how to address it. On this note, I particularly welcome part 1(g) of Mr Hanson's motion, which recognises that ice requires a whole-of-government response encompassing education, treatment, rehabilitation, community services, law reform and policing. I completely agree that the response must be multifaceted and certainly not just focused on enforcement. We cannot enforce our way out of the illicit drug problem. In fact, as I have discussed before, a strict law and order approach, or the war on drugs approach, can often be counterproductive. The Greens' approach to illicit drugs is to take an evidence-based harm minimisation approach to drug regulation.

Mr Hanson's motion mentions the Ted Noffs Foundation. I note that the foundation's position on ice is that law enforcement alone will not solve the problem. Matt Noffs, the CEO of the foundation, wrote a strongly worded article recently calling for an end to what he calls the futile drug prohibition policy. It is positive to see that Ken Lay, the head of the federal government's national task force to help tackle ice, has echoed the call for action beyond law enforcement. Mr Lay said it was time to look at options in both the health and education spaces. He said:

For social problems like these, law enforcement isn't the answer ...

Unless you get into the primary prevention end, unless you stop the problem occurring you simply won't arrest your way out of this. Ice has been on the scene for over a decade and we've had a really strong law enforcement approach and it hasn't resolved the problem. The time's right now to look at the other options.

We cannot consider the issue of ice and what the ACT's role should be in response without considering the existence of the federal government's national task force. The task force was established by Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Part of its rationale is that it should coordinate local, state and federal efforts on ice. The task force will develop a national ice action strategy and has promised to deliver an interim report to the Prime Minister by the middle of the year. It is currently taking submissions. The report is to be considered by the Council of Australian Governments in mid-2015, with a final strategy to be put to COAG before the end of the year.

I am sometimes supportive of the ACT taking unilateral action on issues like this, especially where federal action is lacking or where COAG promises have failed to deliver, as they unfortunately often do. In this case, there is no indication of this, and in fact the task force has only just begun. This speaks to the ACT being part of this national strategy.

Mr Hanson's motion calls for the government to develop a whole-of-government strategy and table it in the Assembly in August. While I am completely supportive of

the ACT engaging strongly on the issue of ice and taking coordinated appropriate action, I think Mr Hanson's request should be adjusted slightly. The ACT's approach should be coordinated with the federal response, and also with the work occurring in New South Wales. The proposed amendment reflects that view—that is, the amendment put forward by Mr Barr.

In addition to that, I will be moving a further amendment circulated in my name. I move:

Add new paragraph (3):

“(3) and calls on the ACT Government to provide an update to the Assembly on the National Taskforce interim report, and implications for the ACT, by the end of the September sitting period.”.

The amendment calls on the government to provide an update to the Assembly on the national task force interim report and implications for the ACT by the end of the September sitting period. The purpose here is to keep us moving forward on this issue. Rather than the ACT at this point going out and developing its own strategy, Mr Barr has moved an amendment which speaks to us being part of the nationally plugged-in approach; I think it is also appropriate that the Assembly receives an update as that work progresses.

I commend my further amendment to the Assembly. As I say, I welcome the fact that Mr Hanson brought this on today. It has given us an opportunity to focus on what is both an important and concerning issue.

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) (4.56): I rise today to support the amendments to this motion. As Minister for Police and Emergency Services I am aware that illicit drug use of any kind is a constant concern for law enforcement, health professionals and the wider community.

ACT Policing has identified within the last 12 months that, consistent with national trends, ACT-based organised crime networks have an increased interest and involvement in ice. The ACT Policing drugs and organised crime investigation team, which incorporates Taskforce Nemesis, is dedicated to investigating outlaw motorcycle and organised crime links.

In October last year ACT Policing made their largest drug seizure. Approximately 29 kilograms of ice was seized as a result of the hard work and dedication of our ACT police force. Two months earlier, in August last year, they identified a commercial grade illicit drug laboratory within a building at Hume. Police located 2.5 tonnes of chemicals and equipment there.

There is no doubt that responding to the very real issue of drug supply and use in our community is an issue that must have a whole-of-government, nationwide approach. I am confident that the intelligence-led and highly sophisticated investigations that ACT police undertake will continue to see increased disruption to this activity.

In addition to the work of ACT Policing, it is important to recognise the unique challenges for our paramedics. As we know, and as the health minister has articulated elsewhere, there are significant health problems associated with the use of this chemical. More frequently, paramedic contact is as a result of an acute behavioural disturbance. This makes the job of paramedics increasingly difficult, and it is of the utmost importance that our paramedics are supported in both their own health and wellbeing and through their clinical training and practice. The same applies to ACT Policing.

No-one in this place, and certainly no-one on this side of the chamber, is disputing the fact that drugs present a problem for our community and real challenges to our health system and law enforcement. As has been said here, we simply cannot arrest our way out of this. Indeed, I would say that you simply cannot punish your way out of this. I think we all have a role to play in being firm with offenders, in being supportive of those who need help. I would say that here we need to be responsive and helpful to those who have put this misuse behind them.

It is for this very reason that the matter is on the COAG table and is receiving the national response from government that it requires. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the important work that those in our emergency services and police force do. I commend the motion and the amendments to the Assembly.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (4.59): The use of crystal methamphetamine is having a significant impact in the ACT and across Australia. In the ACT the data suggests an increase in methamphetamine use. 2.2 per cent of people surveyed in 2013 reported use of methamphetamine for non-medical purposes, defined as use within the previous 12 months, compared to 1.1 per cent of people surveyed in 2010. The caveat on that data is that, as always, we need to be careful in interpreting changes in datasets that involve small sample sizes.

We also know that across the country we are seeing changes in the preferred form of methamphetamine being used, the purity of the drug and the frequency of use. There has been an increase in the number of Australians nominating crystal methamphetamine, or ice, as their preferred form of methamphetamine, from 26.7 per cent in 2007 and 21 per cent in 2010 to 50.4 per cent in 2013. So while there has not been any widespread increase in methamphetamine use across Australia, the type of methamphetamine that is preferred by users has changed.

A recent study, in 2014, showed that the purity of ice in Australia has also increased from an annual average of 21 per cent in 2009 to 64 per cent in 2013. At the same time, the purity of the traditionally lower grade powder has also increased, from 12 per cent to 37 per cent. Not only that but the purity adjusted price of both crystal and powder methamphetamine has decreased. They are now very similar in price.

Added to the change in the preferred form and purity of the drug, there has also been an increase in the frequency of its use, with an increase in the proportion of people using it daily or weekly, from 9.3 per cent to 15.5 per cent. Crystal methamphetamine users were much more likely to use ice on a regular basis, with one-quarter using it at least weekly, compared to 2.2 per cent of those who preferred powder.

Recent data is also suggesting that ice users and those who use methamphetamine at least monthly tend to engage in more risky behaviours than those who use only irregularly—less than monthly—with 90 per cent engaging in risky activity such as working or driving under the influence, as compared to 50 per cent of irregular users.

All of this suggests that we most certainly do need to attend to the issue of methamphetamine use in our community and, in particular, to the use of ice. As a responsible government we acknowledge the issues of concern, including the risk and potential harms associated with its use.

Crystal meth is smoked, injected, ingested orally or snorted. People who use methamphetamine monthly or more often have a rate of mental health diagnosis four to seven times that of those who use it less frequently, and ice users in particular are more likely than those who use other forms to report a mental health diagnosis. For some people the use of ice is associated with violence and psychotic behaviour, and this can have adverse impacts on families and the broader community. These harms were noted in the Australian Crime Commission report on the Australian methylamphetamine market published earlier this year.

People who use methamphetamines, and their families, need to be provided with access to support, information and treatment. It is important that information, advice and interventions are available in locations where users will access them and in ways that are acceptable to them.

As a government the ACT invests \$16.4 million annually in specialist drug treatment and support services. These include information and education, counselling support and case management, withdrawal management, and residential and non-residential rehabilitation programs. In contrast, the commonwealth only funds approximately \$3 million in treatment and support services in the ACT annually.

The ACT has traditionally had the largest proportion of non-government organisations, at 90 per cent, providing treatment, compared to government-operated services. New South Wales has had the smallest proportion of NGOs providing treatment, at only 24 per cent.

ACT drug treatment and support services report a significant increase in the number of people presenting with methamphetamine problems. In the ACT methamphetamine was reported as the principal or other drug of concern for 11 per cent of treatment episodes in 2013-14, up from 6.4 per cent of treatment episodes in the previous year.

The government takes a harm minimisation approach which, from a policing perspective, is focused on supply reduction. It is clear from the Australian Crime Commission's national report on crystal methylamphetamine that organised crime is taking advantage of a profitable illicit market. The ACT does have an existing alcohol, tobacco and other drugs strategy, which is a whole-of-government strategy across all drug types. The next iteration of the strategy is currently being finalised and is expected to be published this year. The overarching approach of the strategy is to focus on the three pillars of harm minimisation: supply reduction, harm reduction and demand reduction.

It is for this reason that I think it is appropriate that we do not try to establish a methamphetamine-specific strategy separate from the whole-of-government strategy. We should not take a fragmented approach to this complex problem. It needs an approach that is consistent with both the nationally agreed direction and with our broader approach to dealing with the use and misuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, as is outlined in the government's existing strategy.

The alcohol, tobacco and other drugs strategy evaluation group, which oversees the development of the ACT alcohol, tobacco and other drugs strategy, provides advice to ACT Health on the changing needs of the ACT community and the relative effectiveness of alternative investments and interventions across the three areas of harm minimisation and also evaluates and monitors the strategy's implementation. The group is made up of expert representatives who seek advice from key committees and they consult with the community, clients, service providers and other key stakeholders. I commend the amendment and, I trust, the amended motion to the Assembly.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): The question is that the amendment to the amendments be agreed to.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (5.06): I will close, and speak to the amendment to the amendments. I will not reiterate what I said in my original speech because much of what I said has been reinforced by those opposite. I thank them for their comments. It would appear that there is a consensus in this place that there is a real problem here with ice, that it is a growing problem and that the response needs to be multifaceted. It is not just about law and order; it is about health, rehab, education and community awareness. Non-government providers need to be a significant part of this. And our response obviously needs to be coordinated not just within the ACT but with the federal government and with other jurisdictions, in particular New South Wales.

I think that, with the amendment to the amendments, the effect of what I am asking for is largely met. I am not getting everything I wanted because the language is slightly modified. But, in essence, through the amendment to the amendments, my motion remains largely unchanged and what I am calling for will be broadly recognised in what has been proposed both by Mr Barr and by Mr Rattenbury. So I will be supporting the amendment to the amendments and then the amendments, as amended, to my motion because that will, I think, achieve what I set out to do—that is, make sure that this government is focused on the issue, that it is looking to a response in the ACT that is cognisant of what is happening in other jurisdictions and is addressing what those implications are for the ACT and informing the community.

The time line has moved from August to September, but, given some of the work that is happening federally, I am comfortable with that. The reality is that we have achieved a good outcome here today. I think there is much work to be done, but just as we were able to work together on the issue of domestic violence recently, I do not want to get bogged down in language. Back then we were talking about whether it was a roundtable or a special meeting. It does not matter what the language is. I do not want to have a squabble in this place about the language; I want to make sure that what we achieve is the effect. I think this will get us there.

I will therefore be supporting what has been proposed by those opposite regarding my motion, but I will look at what comes forward in September to make sure that it is substantive and that there is a body of work that has been done that will address the need. I do put those opposite on notice that if they pay lip-service to this in September, I will revisit this issue. If what is tabled in this place in September is substantive and is on the right track, that will be good, and I will welcome that, but we will wait and see.

In closing, I thank those opposite. I think it is important that we in this place work together cooperatively, that we make sure that action is taken on this, because ultimately the youth of Canberra are increasingly at risk from this scourge. We must do everything we can to protect them and we must do everything we can to make sure that those on the front line, be they government workers, the healthcare workers in our hospitals, the police or our community sector workers in the drug rehab agencies, are adequately resourced, adequately informed and can work together as part of a whole-of-government response. I thank those opposite and I look forward to the government providing its response to this place by the end of September.

Mr Rattenbury's amendment to **Mr Barr's** proposed amendments agreed to.

Mr Barr's amendments, as amended, agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Transport—light rail

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.12): I move:

That this Assembly calls on the ACT Government to delay signing any more contracts to build, design, operate or maintain light rail until after the 2016 Australian Capital Territory election.

Today I call on the ACT government to not sign contracts relating to the capital metro light rail project before the next ACT election in October 2016. In this way the voters of Canberra can have their say on the project before a 23-year, \$2 billion commitment is signed. This motion is about giving Canberrans a voice when it comes to light rail. Costing \$783 million in capital, capital metro is the largest infrastructure project ever committed to by an ACT government. Given this large cost, it deserves the chance to be voted on by the people of Canberra, with full knowledge of the costs, routes, stops and predicted patronage levels.

It is important that we again run through the factors surrounding this light rail project. It will cost \$783 million to construct light rail along the 12-kilometre route, a median aligned route from Gungahlin town centre to Alinga Street in the city. Once constructed, it will cost between \$23 million and \$61 million a year to operate and maintain light rail until 2040. The ACT government will fund light rail through an availability public-private partnership. In essence, it means that the ACT government will pay an annual availability payment to a private consortium to design, build, operate and maintain light rail until 30 June 2039. Respected economists such as

David Hughes believe that this annual availability payment will be somewhere between \$80 million and \$100 million per year.

For this cost we will get minimal public transport benefits. Just 3,946 people are projected to catch light rail during the morning peak. This means that, on population projections contained in the light rail business case, less than one per cent of Canberrans will use light rail to get to work or school in 2021. Most importantly, overall public transport usage in the Gungahlin to the city corridor will also be impacted. The vast majority of light rail users are already catching a 200 series ACTION bus to the city.

It is important that we do not forget that the ACT government also has to take away services and amenities in order to construct light rail. Soon you will see chainsaws on Northbourne Avenue. Of course, you cannot have light rail without chopping down the 430 mainly healthy trees on the median. You also cannot have light rail without cancelling the popular 200 series buses from Gungahlin to the city. These services conveniently run through most Gungahlin suburbs and continue past the city to Russell, Barton, Kingston and often Fyshwick.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the crux of the issue is that the ACT government has no mandate to construct light rail. The electorate has not yet voted on the \$783 million tramline from Gungahlin to the city. ACT Treasury costings of ACT Labor's 2012 light rail policy reveal a \$34 million commitment to continue the investigation and feasibility of light rail in the ACT. There was no mention of a \$783 million tram. There was no mention of the annual operational expenses of the tram. The policy was simply a \$30 million commitment to look into the feasibility of light rail.

Interestingly, part of ACT Labor's 2012 election commitment was a wish that the then Gillard Labor government would contribute \$15 million from Infrastructure Australia to investigate the feasibility of the project. As we all know, Infrastructure Australia, under the Labor government, said:

The case for favouring light rail over bus rapid transit has not been strongly made, especially when the submission itself points to the stronger economic performance of a bus rapid transit option.

The ACT government have no mandate for light rail. The 2012 election commitment was a \$30 million feasibility study, not a \$783 million tram. They have never promised a \$783 million tram in the lead-up to an election. They have never taken a commitment to spend \$783 million to the people of Canberra. Consequently, the electorate have not been given a chance to accept or to disendorse it and they will not accept it until they get a chance to vote on it, I believe.

Even if someone disagrees with me on this point, the project is still vastly different from the proposal submitted to Infrastructure Australia. For a start, the projected cost has already blown out by 28 per cent, from \$614 million to \$783 million. There is a good chance that the cost will reach \$1 billion, given this government's track record when it comes to delivering infrastructure. If there is an extension to Russell, which has been openly speculated on by many, including the minister, surely the cost will exceed \$1 billion.

Of course, the electorate did not know this when they voted on it in 2012. We were told in 2012 that it would cost \$6.8 million a year to operate and maintain light rail. The minister repeated this assertion when I asked him about the operational cost in estimates in April last year. However, the full business case, released late last year, tells us that it will cost \$26 million to operate and maintain light rail in 2021, and the figure grows year on year. The electorate did not know this when they voted in 2012.

We also did not know the forecast patronage levels in 2012. With 3,946 people catching light rail in the morning peak, we now know that less than one per cent of Canberrans will catch light rail to work or school in 2021. Again, the electorate did not know this when they voted in 2012.

As Graham Downie points out in today's *Canberra Times*, there was also no information provided to the 80 per cent of Gungahlin residents and all residents in Kaleen and Giralang that they will lose their current bus services. Let us put it plainly. Before the last election, the electorate was unaware that the ACT government was preparing to spend \$783 million on a tram which will carry less than one per cent of Canberrans during the morning peak. This is why Canberrans deserve a vote on this project before contracts are signed.

The ACT government must know there is a large level of opposition to this project. Almost every constituent I talk to ultimately brings up the topic of light rail, with the vast majority agreeing that it is simply not the right time for it. The overwhelming response I get from my constituents is that they are continually frustrated by this government's blind determination to proceed with the project, often at the expense of other projects in the territory.

Canberrans cannot understand why the ACT government is cutting funding to ACT Policing but proceeding with light rail. Canberrans cannot understand why their footpaths, parks and roads are being neglected all across the ACT so that light rail can be built to serve only a small portion of Canberrans who are travelling in the morning peak. Canberrans do not understand why the best buses in the system—routes 200 and 202—are being taken away and replaced with a slower tram service.

The fact that there is a high level of opposition, and in some quarters perhaps even anger, serves to demonstrate that the ACT Labor government does not have a mandate for this project. The electorate do not accept that they have voted on this, as the government likes to purport. The people of Canberra want to have their say.

My motion today calls on the ACT government to not sign any more contracts for the design, construction, operation and maintenance before the October 2016 election. I am simply saying that Canberra residents should get an opportunity to vote on this project with the full facts in front of them before the territory is locked into a 23-year, \$2 billion commitment. Whilst the government have already spent many millions of dollars on this project, they should stop and seek the support of Canberrans at an election.

At the end of the day, the Chief Minister, Mr Barr, and Minister Corbell must have regard for the ACT taxpayer before signing contracts. It is their statutory duty as ministers to ensure that the ACT gets the best value for money from government contracts. Delaying the signing of the contract is the best and, indeed, the only way to ensure value for money for ACT taxpayers.

Of course, if ACT Labor and the Greens are returned to power after the next election, they will be able to proceed with the contract. The Canberra Liberals have made clear their unequivocal opposition to this project. We voted against spending in last year's budget for the Capital Metro Agency and we have called and will continue to call on the ACT government to stop the project. We have done all we can to stop and delay this project, and we are willing to do all we can to continue to stop this government from signing contracts. We will do everything we can before the October 2016 election.

Overall, we do not want to end up like Victoria. We do not want to see taxpayers' money wasted on a project that will not be built. In this respect, it is in the hands of the government to not sign contracts before the ACT election. Minister Corbell, the shoe is firmly on your foot to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent wisely. By waiting until the next election, light rail can either be supported or rejected. Perhaps Minister Corbell is concerned about the election result and it is for that reason he is so determined to put a poison pill in the contract in an attempt to make the contract harder to get out of.

Minister Corbell must be concerned about the election result, because, if he were not, he would hardly need to bother about the terminate-for-convenience clause. The only reason he would put so much emphasis into the clause would be if he thought that a Liberal victory was likely and the clause could be exercised. If so, it would be because voters had disendorsed Labor's light rail plan.

We ask that this Assembly give a directive to the government to not sign contracts. We ask that this Assembly let the people of Canberra decide whether they want this project or not.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (5.23): I take this opportunity to provide some facts in this debate. Mr Coe calls for the government to delay signing a contract to build, design, operate or maintain light rail until after the 2016 election. He says that the government needs to seek the support of the community on this project and that the best way to do it is through the forthcoming election, next year. I would ask Mr Coe to cast his mind back, not so long ago, to the ACT election held in 2012. He may recall that the former Chief Minister, Ms Gallagher, and I announced the capital metro project as an election commitment during that election. In fact, Ms Gallagher's media release dated 21 September 2012 states:

If re-elected in 2012, ACT Labor will establish the ACT's first large-scale private sector partnership to plan, finance and develop the first stage of a light rail network for Canberra—the Capital Metro.

That document also said very explicitly under the heading “Policy costings”:

The current revised total project cost estimate is \$614 million. This cost estimate will continue to be refined as the project progresses through forward design. This figure includes feasibility, design, construction and vehicle purchase, including a light rail depot.

Our 2012 election light rail commitment was recognised by the Greens as beneficial to the future of Canberra and, as such, was a key part of the parliamentary agreement between ACT Labor and the ACT Greens. The agreement states there is a commitment to:

... progress a light rail network for Canberra by:

establishing a statutory independent authority to implement the light rail project and associated development in the corridor;

undertaking the necessary design studies, preparatory works, financing, procurement and tendering arrangements, with a target date for the laying of tracks for the first route commencing in 2016;

creating a Canberra wide light rail network master plan.

These commitments are being honoured. Canberra is on its way to having light rail construction underway in 2016. But in case Mr Coe is in any doubt about what the people of Canberra were told in 2012, I refer him to a report on ABC news on Friday, 21 September 2012, which said:

Labor says it will establish the ACT’s first large-scale private sector partnership to plan, finance and develop the project.

I also draw attention to what the *Canberra Times* reported in its report on Labor’s election commitment on 22 September 2012. Under the heading “Labor unveil plan for light rail line”, the then Assembly reporter, Mr Noel Towell, reported:

If the project goes ahead, it would be the first public-private partnership on an infrastructure project in the territory’s history. Yesterday’s announcement also means that both Labor and the ACT Greens will go to next month’s election with light rail as a central policy position.

It goes on:

The latest government costings on the scheme have put a price tag of \$614 million on the Civic-Gungahlin line, and Labor has committed \$30 million for design work.

It is very clear what the government’s commitments were.

I present the following papers:

Light rail network project—

Capital Metro Light Rail Project to be delivered through Canberra's first large-scale private partnership—Katy Gallagher MLA—ACT Labor Policy Statement, dated 21 September 2012.

Labor backs light rail—ABC News article, dated 21 September 2012.

Labor unveil plan for light rail—*Canberra Times* article, dated 22 September 2012.

Given that this government have been elected with light rail as a central plank of our policy, it is only right that we honour their wishes, as evidenced by their support and reflected by the members in this place, and proceed with light rail.

As a government, we will not put Canberra's future on hold. It is not in the territory's best interests to hold up the delivery of the first stage of light rail for Canberra. In fact, the project time frames are consistent with infrastructure projects of this size, and it does not give the industry confidence if we start changing those time frames. Investor confidence has already taken a hit following the threats made by the Canberra Liberals in recent weeks. To maintain investor confidence and attract large-scale investors and developers to the territory, we must honour our commitments.

The Canberra Liberals have recently made claims that if they win the next election they will tear up a signed and commenced light rail construction project. They believe that the Victorian state government set a precedent for cancelling contracts in Australia when they announced in February this year that they would pay more than \$300 million to cancel existing contracts for Melbourne's East West Link. The question has to be asked: what exactly would the average Canberra family feel they should pay for Mr Coe to dishonour a contract, "to tear it up", to use his words? How would they feel if the money already invested in this project was wasted and the significant economic benefits of light rail were never realised?

Let us be very clear: we are not just talking about the costs to terminate a contract; we are talking about the money that will not come to the territory if this project does not proceed. Let us be very clear: the \$60 million in federal government money for this project will not be available if this project does not go ahead. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer have made that very clear. The \$60 million contribution from the commonwealth asset recycling scheme is not transferable. Even more, there are no other projects ready to go in the territory that would meet the standards required by the federal government for productive infrastructure. Further, the Prime Minister and the Treasurer made clear that upgrades to existing bus network infrastructure are not eligible under the asset recycling scheme.

Our commitment to build light rail for Canberra was not based on a whim. In deciding to commit to the project the government relied on an extensive range of studies undertaken to prepare the business case, including the city to Gungahlin transit corridor concept design report. That report found that light rail offered greater benefits due to the additional social and economic benefits that this type of infrastructure

brings. Light rail, it concluded, was the best choice for responding to projected growth and it also has the capacity to significantly transform the corridor through land development uplift.

Despite Mr Coe's belief that a sizeable chunk of the population is opposed to the project, what Mr Coe should acknowledge is that it is clear that a majority of Canberrans support it. We appreciate that not everybody does, but that is not unusual for large infrastructure projects that involve light rail. However, detailed market research prepared by a highly experienced and reputable local research firm indicates that over half of Canberrans are in support of the project. Notably, the project is most supported by those under 30, the people who will see the benefit most over the longer term, with 69 per cent in support. But there is also majority support from people aged 30 to 45 and 46 to 64. This report is publicly available.

Further to this statistically valid research, sentiment recorded in face-to-face activities during the Capital Metro Agency's last round of community consultation in January indicated that 58 per cent of people supported the project and 31 per cent were neutral. Anecdotally, when the capital metro team are out and about engaging in the community, the community are excited for the project to begin and they are keen to learn more about what it will deliver for them.

This is not surprising, given the wide-ranging benefits that light rail will deliver for our city. It is part of our vision for a truly sustainable Canberra. Capital metro stage 1 will play a significant role in supporting changed settlement patterns and transport-oriented development. The city centre and Northbourne Avenue are in need of revitalisation to attract increased economic activity and to underpin our transition to an innovation-based economy. This, in turn, will support the long-term viability and vibrancy of the city's town centre network.

In contrast, the opposition have not put forward any vision for our great city. What is their plan for transport for the future? They did not even have a comprehensive transport plan at the last election.

I make no apologies when I say that this project is the right thing for Canberra. It is the right thing for our community. It is the right thing for public transport users. It is the right thing for job creation, and it is the right thing for our future. The government are making the big, bold choices needed for our city's future. We are tackling these challenges responsibly, not shying away when it becomes difficult. The community expects that of governments, and our future depends on it.

Investment in light rail will fundamentally change the way the city grows and Canberrans live. It is a city-shaping project. It is the glue that binds together the city's urban renewal plans. The project will stimulate urban renewal. It will encourage smarter, denser development of the city. And it will help support the city's broad, strategic planning strategies of increasing housing density along key transport corridors. It will also provide business and investment certainty along the corridor, stimulating significant economic activity as land surrounding the light rail increases in value and is used more efficiently—something that we know fixed rail has a distinct advantage over bus transport on.

This is a vital project too for economic activity at a time when we need it most. The first stage of the project will deliver almost \$1 billion in economic benefits across the ACT economy, including 3½ thousand jobs during the construction phase alone. These jobs will create extra opportunities for local businesses and significant economic benefit for the whole of Canberra.

In addition to the proven economic benefits light rail can deliver, there are significant health and social benefits that can be achieved from better connectivity, accessibility, less time spent in cars, less pollution and more social interaction. Modern transport infrastructure brings people together. It gets them out of their cars. It connects them with their destinations easily. It supports more active lifestyles. It helps reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and it encourages people to explore and interact with each other and within the city as a whole.

Given the benefits that this project brings to all of Canberra and the fact that this issue has already been taken to an election in an explicit policy document, the government can only reject Mr Coe's motion. Those opposite may be in the business of laying the ground to break election commitments but we are not. As such, the government will progress the project on a business as usual basis.

We want a modern, vibrant, attractive city that is accessible and welcoming, that stays true to our planned legacy while making a contribution to the future prosperity of our city. Light rail is the key to unlock this future, and the government is committed to our election commitments and to the timely delivery of this city-changing project. The government will not be supporting this motion today.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (5.38): Here we are again, at the end of a sitting day, in the final moments, discussing one of Mr Coe's light rail motions. I notice that, of the many motions Mr Coe has proposed on light rail over the last year, almost all have been listed at number five or six on the notice paper. It makes me wonder why they are pushed out to the end of the day. Perhaps it is because the substance is actually very thin—they just all say, "Stop light rail." Perhaps it is about getting the media headline and once the story is written it does not really matter what happens here in the chamber. Or maybe it is a reflection of the fact that in the party room that is the only spot he can get on the notice paper and that is what the rest of his colleagues think of these motions as well.

This motion calls on the government to cease making any light rail contracts until after the 2016 election. I will not support this motion because I do not agree with taking our city backwards, stalling on good and important initiatives and ignoring the future challenges of our city. As a member of this government and a representative of the Greens, I believe we need to get on with the job to improve the future for our city, to help tackle and solve transport, environmental and social problems. That is what light rail does.

Despite the insistence of the Canberra Liberals and some other opponents, this project stacks up. The facts are there. As a baseline, the full business case has been released

to the community. It was done to best practice standards by professionals in this area. The facts say that this project will generate a billion dollars over 30 years. It will return \$1.20 in benefits for every dollar we invest. This, of course, is one of the many holes in Mr Coe's argument, and no amount of colourful invective can make up for it. The project is a positive one that will return \$1.20 for every dollar invested.

Beyond this bare numerical fact are the facts that our city is rapidly growing, traffic is growing and it is incumbent on us to respond to future challenges—climate change, peak oil, urban sprawl. Light rail is recognised as an excellent tool for driving quality redevelopment, creating transport corridors and higher density growth in an environmentally friendly way. But what is the Canberra Liberals' approach to these future challenges? Literally nothing but to oppose any steps being taken. All we ever hear when the Canberra Liberals are asked this question—and people do ask it from time to time because they think if you are going to oppose something so strongly, you presumably have an alternative—is, “We'll release the transport plan closer to the election.”

They tried to fly below the radar with the same approach at the last election, and all we saw was a transport plan that turned out to be millions of dollars of new roads and car parks that was put out at the last possible moment, with no scrutiny and no analysis of what it would mean for traffic flow in Canberra, let alone its impact on development or social or environmental issues. That is an irresponsible plan for the future of our city. What will the result be if city planning focuses on cars and parking and urban sprawl? It will lead to entrenched problems—social problems, environmental problems, economic problems. It costs the government and individuals more and more as these problems grow and it leads to expensive efforts to retrofit sustainable solutions. This underlines the fact that this is an irresponsible approach.

On that note, I have to mention Mr Coe's recent admission that he plans to tear up light rail contracts if he is in government and let the taxpayer foot the bill. Just to make this crystal clear, Mr Coe will rip up a contract that is for an environmentally sustainable public transport project supported by the majority of the community and assessed as being positive for the city and he will make the taxpayers pay for it. Mr Coe is perhaps the most vocal of all the Liberals in this place in claiming to care about the humble taxpayer and the value of their tax dollar. It is a stunning admission that he will force taxpayers to pay millions of dollars for nothing while at the same time condemning our city to a future without a modern, first-class, sustainably powered light rail system.

The advantages of light rail are vast and extend right across the city. I spoke to the tourism industry advisory council of the Canberra Business Chamber last week and one of the issues discussed, of course, was light rail. Light rail is excellent for tourism. If you think about it, it is unlikely anyone will ever say, “Oh, you should visit Canberra; they have a great new dual-lane road that you should drive on.” It is rather more likely that they will say, “You should visit Canberra; they have an excellent new light rail system. The city is really becoming more interesting and lively.”

As the Tourism and Transport Forum of Australia wrote in its position paper on light rail:

Good light rail systems have an ‘iconic’ value that is attractive to tourists as well as commuters and residents. Whereas bus routes can be difficult for domestic and international visitors to negotiate, light rail networks are often perceived to be simpler and more reliable, largely owing to the fact that routes are permanent and highly visible. Transport is a key element in the visitor experience and an efficient public transport system can significantly enhance a city’s reputation among travellers. In addition, a strong light rail brand can be incorporated into tourism marketing campaigns and information material. Melbourne’s world-class tram system is integral to its image as a sophisticated, ‘liveable’ destination; it is one of the city’s tourism signatures.

The Tourism and Transport Forum of Australia went on to say:

More generally, TTF would urge all levels of government to look at light rail as a potential policy and infrastructure solution to the problems of congestion and urban mobility. Integrated public transport will be essential if Australian cities are to meet the economic, social and environmental challenges of the years to come, and light rail has an important part to play in delivering urban productivity, liveability and sustainability.

There we have it. The Tourism and Transport Forum of Australia outlines not only the tourism benefits of light rail—they spoke very eloquently about that—but also the broader benefits they can see and which I think are consistent with the way the government is approaching the development of the light rail project here in Canberra.

I find the claim made by Mr Coe that an election needs to occur before work continues on light rail rather surprising. Firstly, this was played out prominently before the 2012 election and, secondly, the government needs to get on with governing and improving the city. Why was there no claim to stall on contracts for the Majura parkway until an election was held? That was a very large project also costing hundreds of millions of dollars, yet, as I have alluded to in this place before, there was certainly no such critical analysis at that time.

As I have said in the Assembly before, Mr Coe and the Canberra Liberals’ approach to light rail is clear—it is partisan and political and has no regard to the long-term future of Canberra. As Mr Coe says, the Canberra Liberals do not support light rail and will take every opportunity to try and stop this project. This motion is another fairly thin attempt at that.

I will not be entertaining this motion from Mr Coe. Instead, I will again highlight the positive future that Canberra is headed for, supported by its light rail project. I am optimistic that the experience of the Gold Coast, which recently opened its light rail line, will be reproduced here in Canberra. The initial information I have seen from the Gold Coast is that from 1 August to 31 August 2014 public transport usage on the Gold Coast rose by 21 per cent against the same period the previous year. That is an excellent result founded on the introduction of light rail. Within two months of opening, the Gold Coast light rail had already hit its one millionth paid passenger milestone and more than 3.2 million trips after 172 days of operation to January 2015. This demonstrates the effectiveness of this new public transport solution and showcases the benefits of implementing a reliable and user-friendly system that caters for the huge variety of lifestyles existing on the Gold Coast.

It also underlines the transformative effect this kind of system can have. I think anyone who has been to the Gold Coast over the last 15 to 20 years will know that, like Canberra, it was a place that had a very heavy reliance on the private motor car in particular. To see that change in behaviour on the Gold Coast in response to the introduction of light rail reflects the sorts of opportunities that exist in Canberra. That is important to note because the patronage work that has been done has not accounted for that sort of very significant change in passenger behaviour. If anything, our patronage estimations are, I think, very much on the conservative side.

Of course, there is much more that can be said. No doubt we will continue to have this discussion in this place, but I will leave it at those few remarks today. I will not be voting to support this motion. It is a motion that seeks to stall progress in our city. It seeks to stall a project that is all about investing in the future of our city and building a resilient future for our city and its people.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.47): To conclude, I thank members for their contributions to this extremely important debate. This is, after all, the biggest project in the history of self-government. It deserves to seek the endorsement of the ACT community. This project does not have a genesis in planning; it does not have a genesis in transport; it does not have a genesis in economics—it has a political genesis. This is quite stark when you read today's *Canberra Times* and are reminded of a quote from Minister Corbell a year before the 2012 election, from September 2011, reproduced in an article by Graham Downie:

The Greens once again adopt a completely unrealistic, unstrategic and unconsidered approach to the real challenges of transport in this city, all because they want to jump on the wagon—forgive the pun—of rail.

All because they want to jump on the wagon of rail. This is what the Minister for Capital Metro said about light rail a year before the election, and he now claims to have a mandate on this issue! On 21 September in 2011 he is telling the Canberra community that light rail is unrealistic, unstrategic, unconsidered and not worth the money. This is a person who claims to have a mandate to spend \$783 million on a project when only about three per cent of Canberra's population will live within walking distance of a tram stop. Ninety-seven per cent of Canberra's population will not live within walking distance of a tram stop. They are still going to be dependent on cars, cycling and buses. This is hardly a transformational project. Unfortunately, the only thing it will transform is the territory's finances.

It is interesting that Minister Corbell should come into this place with what he thinks is an open and shut case regarding the ACT Labor Party's commitment to light rail prior to the 2012 election. In contrast to Minister Corbell's spin, if you go to the 2012 policy commitment as costed by ACT Treasury you see the intention of the election commitment—\$30 million to progress design and engineering studies as well as financial analysis to get light rail ready for a private sector partnership. In terms of the costing methodology, this is the quote from the ACT government:

Treasury considers the costing is reasonable to fund concept and preliminary design, economic and financial analysis, and master planning. The difference between the costs announced (and further clarified by the Party) and Treasury costing is an inclusion of cost of funds.

It went from \$30 million to \$33 million, so they stuffed up there. Treasury goes on:

Treasury notes that the proposal is for the next stage of concept and design work. Treasury also notes future work is to be done on financing and delivery models, including a private sector partnership.

Nothing in this document suggests the ACT government have a \$783 million commitment. They talk about what they took to the last election. What they took was a \$30 million commitment, not something that could end up being many, many times that—perhaps in one year alone let alone in totality.

Mr Rattenbury talks about a BCR of \$1.20 per dollar invested, albeit with a lot of bogus assumptions, being an undeniable fact which makes this project worth while. If the BCR—benefit-cost ratio—is so important, why did they not go for bus rapid transit which, on their own figures, has a BCR of \$4.80 for every dollar invested, four times as much as this project? If Mr Rattenbury thinks \$1.20 is enough to support light rail, why does he not support bus rapid transit when it returns \$4.80 per dollar invested?

This is a partisan project; it is a political project; it is not a transport or planning project. Given the lack of endorsement by the ACT community, the prudent course of action for the government is to put the brakes on the project. Do not chop down 400 trees. Do not sign a contract with an international consortium. Do not ignore people's planning rights. Do not cut the buses. Instead, give Canberrans an opportunity to have their say on this proposal. I urge members to respect the voters of Canberra by allowing them to have their say on this \$783 million project and the ramifications it will have.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson

Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Ms Burch**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Anti-war movement

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (5.57): In the wake of commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Anzac landings at Gallipoli, it is also important to recognise that the outbreak of war brought on a strong anti-war movement, and not just in Australia.

Madam Speaker, you may have seen the recent exhibition at the Canberra Museum and Gallery commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a prominent organisation that over the century campaigned tirelessly to abolish the causes of war and violence and to promote disarmament and the peaceful resolution of international conflict.

The exhibition *Women's power to stop war* echoes the centenary of campaigning and coincided with the league's anniversary conference in Canberra. Women's power to stop war is a global movement of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, with a strong presence in both the ACT and Australia as a whole, including campaigning for the establishment of the Canberra peace park.

The exhibition told the story of the Australian women of the league, and in particular the work of the ACT branch that formed in May 1982 with 12 members. The exhibition showed many interesting artefacts and documents, giving a great insight into the league's history and its campaigns. While the exhibition highlighted the stories of eight individual women, the catalogue essay by Margaret Bearlin, the convenor of the history working committee, acknowledges that their work would not have been possible without all of the dedicated women who kept the league's branches alive.

Originally formed in 1915, the league has continuously advocated the peaceful resolution of conflict, and the women's power to stop war movement symbolises their great efforts and achievements. The Australian women who founded the league were driven by the view that the Australian Constitution established Australia on the foundation of social justice, universal education, democracy, freedom and the repudiation of war.

League members were bitterly disappointed with the conditions of the 1918 armistice and the subsequent Treaty of Versailles, whose punitive terms against Germany they said were "sowing the seeds of another world war". After the Second World War the league continued to be a voice for peace and disarmament, opposing Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, conscription and French nuclear testing in the Pacific, for example. Along with other like-minded groups, the league campaigned in the 1950s and 60s for Aboriginal citizenship, land rights and social justice for Indigenous Australians.

The league have been influential on the global stage, actively participating in human rights bodies in the United Nations, and advocating greater engagement of civil society in areas of conflict such as Ukraine, Iraq and Syria. They highlight the importance of investing in peace and social justice and peace between genders rather than investing in war.

The women's power to stop war movement represents generations of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom activists and supporters, committed to the cause of world peace. The United Nations awarded a certificate to the league in 1987, acknowledging them as a "messenger of peace". The league has remained a women's organisation, invoking the solidarity and common cause of women across the globe to support its campaigns, particularly the interests of women and children.

I congratulate the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on marking their centenary year, and for reminding us that the voice of women is a powerful voice for peace and freedom in our world.

Ronald McDonald House

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.01): Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the Ronald McDonald House Charities gala ball. Ronald McDonald houses, as I have spoken about before, are attached to women's and children's hospitals around Australia, and they endeavour to provide support services and places of comfort to seriously ill children and their families. In Canberra, we are very fortunate to have a facility located within the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. Ronald McDonald House Canberra opened their doors in 2012 and have since supported over 670 families, which is a phenomenal achievement.

Ronald McDonald House Charities is managed by a board of directors, and I would like to thank them for the work they do. The board comprises the CEO, Malcolm Coutts OAM; the chairman, Andrew Gregory; Stephen Jermyn; Julie Flynn; Professor Les White; Jennifer Lavoipierre; Stewart Leeman; Carolyn Townsend; Tony Aichinger; and Henry Shiner.

I speak of Ronald McDonald House today because I had the chance to attend their gala ball last Saturday, as did a number of other members of the Assembly. The gala ball was the fourth ball held by Ronald McDonald House in Canberra, and it was attended by over 860 people. It was a great night, and the success of the night was a real credit to the individuals and companies who help support Ronald McDonald House.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars was raised at the event, and it is certainly needed. At a cost of \$132 per room per night, the cost of running the facility adds up. When you multiply that figure by 11 rooms and 365 days a year, it is a huge amount that it takes to operate Ronald McDonald House.

With regard to the ball, I would firstly like to thank Lexus of Canberra for their extremely generous sponsorship of the event. I would also like to thank the Ronald McDonald House Canberra ball committee for organising a wonderful event. The committee includes the president, Hani Sidaros; the treasurer, Michelle McCormack, who also doubled as the gala ball coordinator; Eoghan O'Byrne; Ivan Slavich; Ben Stockbridge; Craig Coleman; Karen Cassell; Troy Cassell; Robert Batkovic; Jacqui Larkham; Anna Kourpanidis; and Mirko Milic. Nerissa Richardson, as the gala ball administrator, and Carmen Barwise, as the gala ball volunteer coordinator, also need to be acknowledged and thanked for their tireless work.

I particularly want to thank Hani Sidaros. He was virtually full time on this project for many months, at a time when his businesses were going through a time of great change. His dedication to the cause is extremely special and one that should be acknowledged here.

A highlight of the night was the many different and desirable auction items which were up for grabs, which were donated. In the live auction, prizes included a Queenstown, New Zealand, golf package as well as a Melbourne Cup marquee package. The silent auction featured over 100 items, including a Jacobs Creek magnum signed by Greg Norman and a Canberra Raiders training experience. I would like to thank everyone who donated an auction item for the night and those who generously bid. Their contributions will go a long way to improve the lives of seriously ill children in and around the capital.

Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge all the partners and sponsors of Ronald McDonald House Charities gala ball. The ball was supported by many wonderful sponsors, but particularly I would like to acknowledge the platinum sponsors, WIN News, Lexus, Capital Hotel Group, the National Convention Centre, Mount Franklin, and Elite Sound and Lighting; the gold sponsors, Coca-Cola, Briolette, Ellendale, Rover, FM 104.7, Elect Printing and Big Impact Advertising; the silver sponsors, REST; and the bronze sponsors, Leader Security, Instinct, Coates, Thinkstream, Martin Brower, DFK Everalls, ACTTAB and NDH. I would also like to put on the record my thanks to Supa IGA East Row for their donation.

I had a wonderful time at the 2015 Ronald McDonald House Charities gala ball. For more information on Ronald McDonald House, including details of their upcoming events, I encourage all members to visit their website at rmhc.org.au.

ACT interschool parliamentary debate

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (6.05): I rise to speak this evening about the ACT interschool parliamentary debating program. I had the pleasure of presiding over a session as Speaker recently, here in the Legislative Assembly. On 10 April students from St Francis Xavier College, St Edmunds College, Narrabundah College, Canberra College, Lake Tuggeranong College and Daramalan College took part in what has become a very popular debating challenge.

This session is part of the Legislative Assembly's broader education program and seeks to give students an introduction to the Assembly, an experience of debating in the Westminster tradition, the opportunity to practise public speaking skills in the formal setting of the chamber, and knowledge and experience in working with parliamentary terminology and practices.

Sitting in the Speaker's chair definitely reinforced for me the important work our own Speaker and deputy speakers do in this place. It was a great opportunity to get a different perspective of debate.

I have to commend the students. Their debate was of a very high quality and very informed. Anyone who thinks young people have little interest in politics or issues in our community simply needs to come along to one of these sessions and listen to the students. They debated a range of issues, including whether Australia needs to review its current contribution to foreign aid, whether the policy of direct action addresses climate change successfully, and whether or not the introduction of point-to-point cameras focuses on revenue raising rather than safety. They were all very good questions, I think you would have to agree. The subsequent debates were well informed and passionately argued.

Each school brought four team members to debate an allocated topic, as well as providing questions on notice to another school. After the presenting team responded to these questions, the floor was opened up to questions without notice. It was great to see how engaged the students were, as well as how intelligently and passionately they responded to the issues.

The quality of debate presented by these young people was incredible—not only the intelligent and well-formed content of their arguments but also the respectful and passionate way in which they debated. It was wonderful to see so many students so engaged in political matters and to see the talent and passion that they brought to the chamber. That is not to say that we do not bring such talent and passion to the chamber every sitting day!

I sincerely hope that the students who participated got something out of the sessions, and that it might have sparked an interest for some of them in a future political career. I think it is tremendous that young people are engaging with the Assembly in a number of ways.

Another example of this was my recent work experience student, Freya Brent, who chose to come to my office to work during her recent school holidays. Freya is a year 12 student at Radford College, and it was an enormous pleasure to have her in the office last month and give her the opportunity to get an understanding of the kind of work we do. Freya helped write speeches, research issues and attended meetings and events. It was a pleasure to have her in the office. Again, Freya is another young woman that gives us confidence in our future.

I would like to thank the Legislative Assembly staff for their work on the parliamentary debate and also for helping Freya to get set up for the week she was here and making her feel welcome. I thank them for all the work they do to engage ACT students and the broader community and to help them get a better understanding of our democratic processes here in the Assembly.

Anzac Day—schools

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (6.09): Last Wednesday, 29 April 2015, I had the pleasure of attending two school events with an Anzac commemoration theme. The first was at Rosary Primary School in Watson, and in the afternoon I was at St Clare's College in Griffith.

First, I would like to thank Rosary primary for the invitation to attend their Anzac ceremony held at the lone pine tree on their school oval. I met members of the Australian armed forces and many members of the Rosary school community, including Lieutenant Colonel Paul Rogers, Squadron Leader Ric Peapell and parish priest Father Kieran. Father Bernie, who was a former military chaplain, also was in attendance.

As with last year, there was a great performance by the years 5 and 6 string ensemble—Maddy Jiang, Elisha Adisa, Natalie Neshev, Lucinda Peapell, Sara Blakey and James Northcote. It was good to see the respect shown by the representatives from each year level as they placed their respective wreaths, as part of the solemn ceremony that also included flag-raisers Patrick Bethune and Boyd Kelly. Indeed, the whole student body of Rosary primary showed exemplary discipline and respect during the ceremony.

Congratulations once again to Alison Marks and Philippa Brotchie, who coordinated the ceremony and the Rosary remembers Anzac display. Their organisation of this wonderful commemoration event sets a high benchmark for future events. Congratulations also to principal Maureen Doszpot and her enthusiastic admin and teaching staff for their commitment to Rosary primary and to the school community. It always makes it a pleasure to attend events at the school.

In the afternoon I attended the St Clare's College school assembly, where I was invited to be one of the two speakers for their special Anzac tribute. I thank school principal Mr Paul Carroll, teachers, staff and students for inviting me to join the St Clare's College community for this special occasion. My special thanks and congratulations go to Sarah Huntly, the defence transition coordinator, who did such a great job in organising this respectful commemoration.

I was honoured to pay tribute to our Anzac servicemen and women and commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first landing at Gallipoli. Anzac Day is one of our most important national occasions as it marks the anniversary of the first major military action Australia and New Zealand fought during the First World War. This year is particularly special as it marks 100 years since the Anzac troops first landed at the Gallipoli Peninsula on 25 April 1915. The campaign endured for eight long months, during which time Australia lost an estimated 8,709 soldiers.

During this 50th anniversary year of St Clare's College, I felt that it was fitting that I also talk about an often overlooked area of military history—that is, the significant contribution made by women and families during the war. I also note that St Clare's College has quite a number of Defence Force families in the college community, and for those families the commemoration of the day obviously had extra significance.

The families of our Anzac soldiers—the mothers, wives and sisters—100 years ago played a critical support role for the men at the front and helped to pave the way towards gender equality in the workforce. Women, of course, made a huge contribution to the war effort not only on the battlefields as nurses but on the home front as well. From a population of around five million Australians in 1914, 416,809

men enlisted during the First World War. This was nearly 10 per cent of the existing population and from this figure alone the impact of the war was quite incredible, not only on those who served but on all the wives, mothers, daughters, sisters and extended families that were left behind. No-one was left untouched by this global war. More tragic still for those families was that many would never be reunited with their loved ones again.

During this time women wanted to make a valuable contribution to the war effort. However, women in 1914 were not able to hold military positions except as nurses. One of the major areas which women contributed to was fundraising, and many charities were established to help the men at the front. After the onset of the war, many women began replacing the labour shortage left by men in the workforce. Women began to take up positions in sectors that were previously closed to them.

One hundred years on from Gallipoli, I feel it is important to honour the courage, strength and spirit shown by both men and women at this time. The spirit of Anzac that was born on the fields of Gallipoli burns forever in the hearts of all of us. Here today we are safe and free, privileged to have basic rights and the opportunity for a bright future. As a child of refugees from Hungary in 1957, I certainly appreciate the legacy that we all are the beneficiaries of today. (*Time expired.*)

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.14 pm.

Schedules of amendments

Schedule 1

Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill 2014

Amendments moved by Mr Coe

1

Clause 2

Page 2, line 5—

omit clause 2, substitute

2 Commencement

- (1) This Act (other than section 4, so far as it inserts section 42D (1) (e)), commences on 1 July 2015.

Note The naming and commencement provisions automatically commence on the notification day (see Legislation Act, s 75 (1)).

- (2) Section 4, so far as it inserts section 42D (1) (e), commences on—

(a) 1 July 2016; or

(b) if, before 1 July 2016, the Minister fixes another day by written notice—the day fixed.

Note A single day or time may be fixed, or different days or times may be fixed, for the commencement of different provisions (see Legislation Act, s 77 (1)).

- (3) The Legislation Act, section 79 (Automatic commencement of postponed law) does not apply to this Act.

2

Clause 4

Proposed new section 42D (1)

Page 4, line 19—

omit proposed new section 42D (1), substitute

- (1) The notifiable invoice register must include the following for each notifiable invoice:

(a) the name of the entity invoicing the Territory;

(b) if the entity invoicing the Territory has an ABN—the ABN;

(c) the name of the responsible Territory entity for the invoice;

(d) a brief description of what the invoice is for;

(e) the date the invoice was received;

(f) the date the invoice was paid;

(g) the value of the good, service or work charged for under the invoice;

(h) anything else prescribed by regulation.

3

Clause 4

Proposed new section 42E (1) (b)

Page 5, line 22—

omit

5 years

substitute

2 years

4

Clause 4

Proposed new section 42G

Page 6, line 13—

omit

good or a service

substitute

good, service or work

5

Clause 4

Proposed new section 42H (b)

Page 6, line 19—

omit proposed new section 42H (b), substitute

- (b) prevent responsible Territory entities from making available information about, or the text of, a notifiable invoice otherwise than as required by this part if any agency is required under law to do so or can otherwise properly do so.

6

Clause 6

Proposed new section 12C

Page 8, line 6—

omit

\$10 000

substitute

\$25 000

Schedule 2

Government Procurement (Transparency in Spending) Amendment Bill 2014

Amendments moved by the Minister for Economic Development

1

Clause 4

Proposed new sections 42A and 42B

Page 3, line 7—

omit proposed new sections 42A and 42B, substitute

42A What is a notifiable invoice?—pt 3A

- (1) For this part, a **notifiable invoice** is an invoice for the prescribed amount or more, payable by a responsible territory entity for goods, services or works provided to the Territory or a Territory entity.

- (2) However, a **notifiable invoice** does not include—
- (a) an invoice for goods, services or works provided by the Territory or a Territory entity; or
 - (b) an invoice prescribed by regulation.

2

Clause 4

Proposed new section 42F

Page 6, line 1—

omit proposed new section 42F, substitute

42F Territory entities to provide material for notifiable invoice register

The responsible Territory entity for a notifiable invoice must, within 21 days after the end of the month in which the invoice was paid—

- (a) enter the information mentioned in section 42D (1) for the invoice in the register; or
- (b) give the information to the director-general for entry in the register.

3

Clause 5

Proposed new dictionary definition of *notifiable invoice*

Page 7, line 8—

omit

section 42B

substitute

section 42A

4

Clause 6

Proposed new section 12C heading

Page 8, line 5—

omit the heading, substitute

12C Notifiable invoice threshold—Act, s 42A (1)
