



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**EIGHTH ASSEMBLY**

**5 AUGUST 2015**

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**Wednesday, 5 August 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.

## **Petition**

*The following petition was lodged for presentation, by Mrs Dunne, from 118 residents:*

### **Riverview development—zoning—petition No 10-15**

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that: We do not approve of the change of zoning from agricultural to residential for the Riverview development site in West Belconnen.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to: We request that the Riverview development site becomes a nature reserve/National Park for the community, which would include Ginninderra Falls as part of that National Park/nature reserve, if this is possible to include. We do not want 11,000 homes built on the Riverview development site.

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

## **Leave of absence**

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Fitzharris for this sitting due to illness.

## **Domestic violence**

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in March 2015 the Assembly agreed to bipartisan support to tackling domestic violence in the ACT to produce better outcomes for victims of family violence and to reduce the damaging inter-generational and societal effects that family violence causes;

- (b) on 25 June 2015 the Attorney-General noted calls from stakeholders to establish a dedicated Domestic Violence Court;
  - (c) that, notwithstanding the *Courts Legislation Amendment Act 2011* giving the legislative framework for a Family Violence Court, the management of the Family Violence list is not facilitated as a full-time Domestic Violence Court at present; and
  - (d) that stakeholders have called for a Domestic Violence Court with full-time staff to attend with applications, breaches of orders, hearing of contested matters, sentencing and all matters dealing with domestic violence; and
- (2) calls on the ACT government to establish a full-time Domestic Violence Court.

It is estimated that about 1.6 million Australian women have experienced domestic violence in some form. In Australia, around one in three women has experienced physical violence and almost one in five has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. As we all know, and it has been the subject of debate in this place, domestic violence is an ongoing issue in the ACT.

ACT police have attended an average of almost seven family violence related incidents a day in Canberra in the past year. The Chief Police Officer reported that more than 1,200 incidents have already been reported to ACT Policing this year alone—and 2,489 cases in the past 12 months. While family violence often constitutes verbal or emotional abuse, assault or humiliation, there are less obvious acts, including control over finances and damage to sentimental property. The majority of these matters can come before the courts.

It is pleasing to me that we have had, in the main, a bipartisan approach to this issue. In March 2015, the Assembly agreed to an approach to taking steps towards tackling domestic violence in the ACT. That resulted in a roundtable that I know a number of members here attended. It was aimed at producing better outcomes for victims of family violence and helping to reduce the damaging intergenerational and societal effects that family violence causes.

There were literally dozens of people who were working at the coalface tackling domestic violence at that roundtable, sharing their knowledge. It was a useful exercise. The panel heard, and people have been discussing the issue, that creating a specialised domestic violence court focusing on victim welfare could help address what has been described as the “most important social issue in Australia”. ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner Mr John Hinchey, Australian Federal Police officer Jo Cameron, Domestic Violence Crisis Service executive director Mirjana Wilson and YWCA Canberra CEO Frances Crimmins were on the forum’s panel.

I will just go through some of the comments that have been made by people on the front line with regard to this issue. It is very important that the steps that are taken towards combating domestic violence in this town come from the bottom up. I know that the government has taken steps in this regard; I know that it has been listening. I know that the roundtable has produced a report for the government. But on 17 June 2015 the *Canberra Times* reported:

Magistrates without an understanding of domestic violence put women at risk as they are unable to treat cases appropriately, a key ACT legal support service says ...

Women's Legal Centre executive director Elena Rosenman said the service would be extremely supportive of the specialised court as historically women could be placed at risk "both through the process and the outcome" when domestic violence matters and protection orders reached court.

"A specialised domestic violence court means these matters would be heard by someone with a sophisticated understanding of domestic violence, someone who is alert to red flags," she said.

That is a quote from Elena Rosenman, someone who is on the front line at the women's legal centre.

Currently, criminal charges relating to family violence are listed separately and heard in the Magistrates Court as part of the family violence intervention program. That has been occurring since 2011. So steps certainly have been taken within the courts regarding this issue.

The Victims of Crime Commissioner, John Hinchey, said the court was not efficiently resourced for the specialist position, with the magistrate dealing with the family violence list already regularly called away for other duties. I will quote the Victims of Crime Commissioner:

"It has a compounding effect ... that magistrate then has to set hearing dates for those other matters ... it compromises the speciality that our family violence court is supposed to build," he said.

"That court is under a heavy workload and decisions around resourcing have to be made by the chief magistrate.

"This is something I would ask government to pay close attention to in future resourcing of the court."

In the ACT the family violence court only deals with criminal matters. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service executive director Mirjana Wilson said that incorporating other matters into a specialised court would be worth considering for the ACT, particularly when trying to align bail and protection order conditions. She said there would be benefits from a holistic approach to legal matters surrounding domestic violence, but was unsure if all measures could be dealt with by one court. I quote:

It is a really complex issue ... We have specialist domestic violence services dealing with victims in the support phase ... it would be great to see the same specialisation held up there as being necessary in the legal system.

Mr Hinchey said that breaches of domestic violence protection orders should go before the specialised court, but initial hearings should be kept separate as the workload may be too heavy. Ms Wilson said that a dedicated domestic violence magistrate would allow the judiciary to develop a better understanding of victims and be more consistent when sentencing and protection orders. I quote:

The criminal justice system is really about the perpetrator of the crime not the victims ... Having someone specialised starts to shift focus to victim welfare space.

That is a very important point. We want the legal system, the court system, when it comes to domestic violence, to be focused on what is best for the victim, not necessarily what is in the court and certainly not what is best for the perpetrator. We really want to put the victims of domestic violence, in most cases women, at the centre of the system.

The women's legal centre executive director Elena Rosenman said the specialised court would "signify clearly that as a society we value the safety of women and their children". She said specialised courts went hand in hand with specialised legal assistance services. I quote:

Currently at the Centre we see many women who have been through the process of applying for a domestic violence order or related family law matters with no legal support while the perpetrator has been able to secure legal assistance ...

In other Australian jurisdictions, magistrates and judicial officers dealing with family violence matters undergo specialised training, a measure Ms Wilson and Mr Hinchey would like to see introduced in the ACT. I will refer to a recent article. On 3 August 2015, the *Courier Mail* reported:

QUEENSLAND'S Chief Magistrate is launching ... specialist magistrates tasked with tackling Queensland's family abuse shame and giving victims a greater voice in court.

Describing family violence as a "horrendous blight on the community", Judge Ray Rinaudo said:

... specially trained magistrates would deal with more complicated cases wherever they were across the state.

The article said:

The *Not Now, Not Ever* report, handed down earlier this year—

in Queensland—

recommended widespread changes to the way domestic violence victims and their cases were treated by the courts.

The report found many victims did not believe their cases were taken seriously by police or magistrates and "some felt their safety was not prioritised".

It found some victims were waiting up to six weeks between when an application for an urgent protection order was filed and when it was heard.

Southport will trial the scheme. It grappled with 2800 abuse cases last year, while Beenleigh had 2000 and Brisbane Central 1700.

Mr Rinaudo said:

... it would give magistrates a heightened level of awareness of the issues relating to domestic violence, so they would be up-to-date and consistent with decisions across the state.

They are doing it in Queensland, Madam Speaker. Part of what we have all agreed in this place is that we want to be at the forefront. The ACT has the ability, because of our size and the will that we have in this place and across our community, to be at the forefront. If they can do these things in Queensland, if they can do them in other jurisdictions, why can we not do them here?

The Families ACT executive officer, Will Mollison, said that often victims did not get the support they needed when a matter reached the legal system, with measures like restraining orders sometimes escalating violence. I quote:

“If you view domestic violence through the lens of a control issue sometimes that can cause it to escalate,” he said.

“In extreme cases we see the tragic consequences where women are killed when they try to protect themselves.”

Mr Mollison said one suggestion was to follow US experiments with “‘victim-centred’ domestic violence courts which could become the first step of a recovery for victims”. I quote again:

“When we’re talking about court we’re addressing the offender and the offence, it’s all about the men which is not necessarily in the best interests of the woman,” he said.

Madam Speaker, the point I am making today is that there is a shared view in this place and across the community that action needs to be taken when tackling domestic violence.

There has been a lot of conversation. I commend that, and that conversation should continue to occur. I commend members in this place across the political divide who have all taken steps. They have all shown a willingness and determination to tackle this issue. Indeed, I commend the government for many of the initiatives that it has taken in this regard. I say well done to them.

But what we are hearing from those on the front line who are focused on protecting victims is that they want this to occur. People who are dealing with the victims on a day-to-day basis—the women’s legal centre, the Victims of Crime Commissioner and others—are saying, “The time has come; let us take action.” They want to see the action.

Importantly as well, this is the sort of initiative that does not necessarily just put increased demand on all of the stretched services. Something that came out from the roundtable we had was that certainly there is a need for additional resourcing for the

front-line services but we need to make sure that we are nipping this in the bud, that we have got the systems in place that can provide some sense of prevention of domestic violence. This initiative would help in that space.

We have other jurisdictions that are doing something similar, who have instigated and already adopted these practices. In South Australia it goes further; they are hearing protection order applications. In Victoria, the family violence magistrate can also deal with related bail applications, family law parenting orders and victim compensation, and in some cases can order offenders into behavioural programs. I know that the Attorney-General is aware of these issues and these calls. I know that all of us are. We have been in communication with people who are in related portfolios with people on the front line, so there is an understanding that this needs to happen.

I plead with the government to support my motion today, to say, “Enough is enough when it comes to domestic violence. We are going to take action. We are not going to drag our heels when it comes to this.” The court can adapt. The court can do this. If there are additional resources required, so be it, but if this is not going to be a priority for us, after everything that we have said—if this is not going to be a priority for this Assembly after everything that we have said—I would be disappointed. And ultimately we would be letting down the victims of crime, the victims of domestic violence, the people on the front line who are combating this and who expect leadership, expect us in this place to take action. That is what they are calling for. Let us hear those calls. I again plead with the government to support this motion and establish a full-time domestic violence court in the ACT.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (10.16), by leave: I move the amendments circulated in my name together:

(1) Insert new paragraph (1)(e):

“(e) the ACT’s Family Violence Intervention Program provides a coordinated justice and community response to criminal family violence, effectively establishing relationships between agencies and ensuring they work together cooperatively; and”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the ACT Government to give consideration to the extension of the Family Violence Court to include civil domestic violence orders, as well as consideration to a full-time dedicated magistrate to domestic and family violence matters, as part of its broader legislative reform program, and report back to the Assembly.”.

I thank Mr Hanson for moving this motion today. The government welcomes ongoing discussion on the way we respond to domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, in the ACT. The motion presents an opportunity to further reflect on the efforts we are making as a community to address domestic and family violence.

Preventing family violence is and continues to be a high priority for the government. For our responses to achieve the aspirations of the national ACT and national



strategies aimed at preventing this violence, we need to ensure our efforts are integrated and joined up. The amendments I am moving to the motion today have the effect that the Assembly calls on the government to give consideration to the extension of the Family Violence Court to first of all include its responsibilities in the area of civil domestic violence orders as well as to give consideration to a full-time dedicated magistrate for domestic and family violence matters as part of the government's broader legislative reform program.

My amendments deal with two things: firstly, they recognise there is potentially value in having the Family Violence Court deal with all applications for domestic violence orders or protection orders, which is not the case at the moment; secondly, consideration should be given to the issue of whether the Family Violence Court should be headed up by a full-time dedicated Family Violence Court magistrate.

The ACT has an established Family Violence Court which is already able to deal with the domestic family violence offences. It is a specialised court recognised in legislation and it recognises the nature of domestic and family violence and the particular needs of domestic and family violence victims. Part of this includes recognition of the social harm domestic and family violence causes and the context in which it occurs.

With the current arrangements, the Chief Magistrate is responsible for managing the business of the Magistrates Court generally and the business of the already established Family Violence Court. We have a magistrate appointed to the management of this court, who is currently Magistrate Fryar, but obviously she also has other duties as a magistrate more broadly across the Magistrates Court. There is already a dedicated list each week of family violence cases. Each week the Family Violence Court as a specialised court is able to deal with mentions, case management, applications made during criminal matters and sentences on pleas of guilty.

The Family Violence Court, as I have said, is usually presided over by the same magistrate, who is currently Magistrate Fryar. But all magistrates are across the issues that occur in family violence as it is a sad reality that family violence is part of the day-to-day core business of the Magistrates Court. There is potentially value in the benefits of a specialised Family Violence Court magistrate. I believe these matters should be given further consideration and that there should be discussion with the Magistrates Court about those.

The government recognises that increasing specialisation can bring benefits, but it also may bring limits in terms of the flexibility and perspective of the court when dealing with matters that may not immediately be identifiable as domestic violence. My amendments recognise that this is the first step in a conversation about the benefits and the potential cons around a specialised magistrate. It is important that in bringing this discussion forward we also bring the courts with us on this conversation.

In presenting the Court's Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 I stressed that legislating for a specialised Family Violence Court acknowledges the specialisation and inspiration of the Family Violence Court and recognises the complexities, vulnerabilities and special interests and protection of individual victims and the community as a whole. This statement remains true today.

In addition to the operation of the Family Violence Court, the ACT has had the benefit of the family violence intervention program, or the FVIP, as a coordinated criminal justice and community response to criminal family violence. This is a longstanding institution, a coordinated interagency response which was first recommended by the ACT Community Law Reform Committee in 1995 and which commenced in May 1998. The FVIP's focus is on improving the criminal justice system response to family violence by ensuring all members work cooperatively together, maximise safety and protection for victims of family violence, provide opportunities for offender accountability and rehabilitation and work towards the continual improvement of the program itself.

The FVIP is made up of members from ACT Policing, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Corrective Services, the Victims of Crime Coordinator, Legal Aid, ACT Health, the Community Services Directorate, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the courts and tribunals. The FVIP has been recognised by the Australian violence prevention awards on three occasions since it was first instigated.

The Australian Institute of Criminology reported on the effectiveness of the FVIP in 2012 and found there was evidence that the FVIP is effective in establishing relationships between agencies and in ensuring they work cooperatively in responding to family and domestic violence. That report from the Institute of Criminology made 22 recommendations on how the FVIP can achieve its aims, and the memorandum of agreement between the relevant agencies was remade in response to those recommendations. This 17-year commitment to the family violence intervention program is one example of a strong bipartisan commitment by successive governments to addressing domestic and family violence.

Mr Hanson's motion is a timely one; it comes at a time when the government is working very closely with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and other key government and community organisations to strengthen our response to domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, in the ACT. A key piece of this work is the government's response to the Domestic Violence Prevention Council's report on domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, in the ACT.

That report follows on from the extraordinary meeting of the council which was held in April this year, which saw over 55 participants attending, including nine members of the Assembly, and which gave everyone the opportunity to have an open and honest conversation about how the government and other stakeholders could further strengthen and improve responses to domestic and family violence, including sexual assault. The government expects to table its response to the roundtable's recommendations during this sitting period. The response will welcome the council's recommendations and it will outline the government's intention to use the recommendations as a basis for further change and improvement.

In addressing the 33 recommendations in the council's report the government will take the opportunity to incorporate the council's views in the second implementation plan under the ACT's prevention of violence against women and children strategy.

Many of the council's recommendations have been directly referenced, addressed and progressed in the second implementation plan, and many of the issues identified by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council will require detailed conversations in a range of fora, and meaningful progress will take further time and a sustained effort. The government remains committed to this effort and we understand that long-term responses must be developed alongside the existing crisis responses.

I have also previously announced significant reforms, with the first stage of reform anticipated in the middle of next year. I announced these reforms ahead of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council extraordinary meeting. Some of these reforms will be based on the ACT's response to the joint Australian Law Reform Commission and New South Wales Law Reform Commission report, *Family Violence—A National Legal Response—Report 114*. The ALRC report included 131 recommendations that relate specifically to states and territories, and they cover education, training, additional support for people who have lived experience of domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, as well as specialisation in courts for domestic and family violence.

I agree that the establishment of a dedicated Family Violence Court magistrate requires careful consideration, and it requires bringing the judiciary with us in relation to those discussions. This consideration is already being undertaken by the government in consultation with key stakeholders, and my amendments to the motion today will allow those conversations to continue as we take a step forward. Part of the government's response to the Australian Law Reform Commission's reforms will include consideration of ways that the current Family Violence Court operates and what reforms can be progressed to strengthen its operation. Further consultation on these reforms will also allow a considered and practical approach to meet the needs of different stakeholders, including the judiciary.

I recall meeting the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, earlier this year. I had a great opportunity to sit down and speak with her about her heartrending experience of family violence but also to talk to her about her perspectives on it. What was compelling from my conversation with her is that whilst we can focus very much on a range of technical and legal and service delivery responses, all of which are very, very important, she also makes the compelling point that, at the end of the day, family violence is a gender issue. Family violence is about a power and balance and about the way too many men view women.

She stated very clearly that to address these issues going forward we must have in the forefront of our minds not just the legal policy, not just the service delivery considerations but also a recognition of the gender issues at play and the importance of continuing to recognise that issue in engaging with this very difficult issue. Those are points well worth keeping in mind.

I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this motion forward today. I reiterate the government's commitment to taking a considered, evidence-based approach to this important and complex issue to ensure we get the best possible results. I commend my amendments to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (10.29): I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I appreciate the interest he has taken in this issue but also the interest all the members in the Assembly have taken in tackling the issue of domestic violence in the ACT. As Mr Hanson cited at the beginning of his speech in some of the figures and statistics that he highlighted, domestic violence remains a terrible problem in Australia and in the ACT, and we have all heard the scale of the issue.

We know women continue to be subject to physical and sexual violence, and the statistics are dismaying. One in three women will be subject to violence in their lifetime, and almost half of the women who experience violence by an ex-partner said that children had seen or heard the violence, suggesting that this affects around 13,000 children in the ACT. These sorts of numbers are, to some extent, incomprehensible yet they are the grim reality of what is happening in our community and warrant a strong response from the community as a whole. We as legislators have a particular role to play in that.

Family violence, as we have talked about before, comes in a variety of forms. It is of course physical abuse, but also sexual abuse and the somewhat more insidious emotional, verbal and psychological abuse. It can also take the form of social, economic and spiritual abuse. As a community we need to work hard to change and mould the underlying community values that shape the social context in which domestic and family violence occurs. We have already acknowledged that the rates of family violence are not dropping, and that it is something that is pervasive in our own community.

I fully support the tripartisan approach this Assembly has been taking to the issue in recent months. The government has clearly committed to improving efforts on tackling domestic violence. Its efforts were outlined recently in the family violence statement it made in the 2015-16 budget. This covered various measures the government has committed to through the budget, including expanding the capacity of ACT domestic and sexual violence crisis services and funding ACT public schools to provide new educational programs. ACT Policing also has a new focus on family violence, and we have heard our police chief indicate his concern at the number of callouts that relate to family violence.

In relation to establishing a full-time Family Violence Court, it is important to note that the ACT Magistrates Court has made concerted efforts on its approach to family violence in the last few years. This included a restructure which created a specialised criminal court to hear domestic violence offences. This occurred in 2011, and as Mr Hanson's motion notes, the government also amended the Magistrates Court Act to give statutory recognition to the family violence list in the Magistrates Court. To a degree, we already have a Family Violence Court; the question is about its scope and how it might be improved.

The Family Violence Court function in the Magistrates Court allows a magistrate to sit specifically as the Family Violence Court magistrate. The Family Violence Court

exercises criminal jurisdiction and deals with criminal proceedings in relation to summary and indictable domestic violence offences if the person was 18 years old or over at the time of the alleged offence. It also deals with bail proceedings for adults charged with domestic violence offences and proceedings in relation to a breach of a sentence relating to domestic violence offences.

Establishing this court with its criminal jurisdiction in 2011 was a considerable change. Nevertheless, it remains a reasonable question whether this court structure needs further strengthening to include civil matters in its jurisdiction, and that is the discussion we are having today. I support looking into this and the degree to which this could strengthen the ACT's response to family violence. It is the case that in some other Australian jurisdictions, family violence courts have a broader jurisdiction and they hear civil matters. Including civil matters would certainly expand the operation of the ACT's domestic violence court considerably, and with that comes resource implications.

As always, it is a reasonable question to ask whether that is the best way to use those resources. As an example, the Victims of Crimes Commissioner, Mr Hinchey, made comments in the *Canberra Times* recently saying that breaches of domestic violence protection orders should go before the specialist domestic violence court, but initial hearings should be kept separate as the workload of the court was already too heavy. They are interesting comments, and they go to a piece on ABC Radio on the *PM* program last night. Members may have heard it as it was on at a time just after the Assembly had adjourned.

It talked about the fact that Victoria is currently holding a royal commission into family violence. It has heard that, in some cases, the court system is making things worse. The family violence magistrate in the Victorian Magistrates Court who works only on family violence matters says that because of overwhelming demand, she has only about five minutes for each matter. This is of great concern. To do it properly would obviously take longer. She said she has to try and pick the most important cases, especially those that appear most risky or to involve children.

This raises interesting questions in the sense that I think the intent here is right—to have a dedicated court would seem to provide good answers, but what does that look like, and is it the best approach to channel all of the matters to one magistrate, or is it appropriate, as is currently the case and as John Hinchey has suggested, that initial hearings should be kept separate? These are good questions, and I do not know the answers at the moment. I am aware that stakeholders have supported this proposition.

The *Canberra Times* reported on this in June with the Women's Legal Centre, the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre and the Victims of Crime Commissioner being positive about the prospect of an improved Family Violence Court in the ACT. When those community organisations speak to it, there is no doubt that there is merit in the idea. They are at the front line and they understand the issues very quickly. But as the Victorian example I have cited touches on and as Mr Hinchey has observed in his comments, there is complexity to it.

The specific call in the motion is that the government establish a full-time domestic violence court. It is reasonable before agreeing outright to that proposition now on the

floor of the chamber that we take some time to examine the proposal and how it would work. It is important to look thoroughly at the idea of a full-time domestic violence court, how it would be established, the cost and benefits, and to gain the input of the court and other key stakeholders at the operational level and the practical roll-out level. Mr Hanson's motion does not set out the details of how the new court would work. I am sure he would say, "Well, of course not." It is not his job to do that part of it, but that work needs to be done. It is fair to give some time to explore the concept fully and report back to the Assembly.

I stress that from my point of view this is not and should never be construed as a dismissal of Mr Hanson's motion for the idea of a full-time domestic violence court. I support progressing this idea further, and I am certainly attracted to the idea. It is sensible that we properly explore how it would work, have the government report back to the Assembly and then the Assembly can make a fully informed decision about whether to change the legislation. I believe this is the best way to advance the proposal and ensure that it works properly.

I hope the spirit of tripartisanship we have shown so far on domestic violence continues and that through my support for the amendments moved by Mr Corbell Mr Hanson will see that this idea is progressing, that there is broad support for it in the Assembly, and that there is a commitment to improving all of the facets of how we deal with domestic violence in the ACT. It is clear to me, both from the public discussion we have heard and through some of the filters I specifically get through the corrections portfolio, that we have work to do to improve the system in the ACT and to make sure we provide the protection for victims of domestic and family violence that the community clearly expects.

**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) (10:38): I join with the Attorney-General and Mr Rattenbury in thanking Mr Hanson for moving this motion. The government remains committed to supporting those who have experienced domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, and we will not tolerate this type of violence in the territory.

As highlighted by Mr Hanson in March this year, the Assembly agreed to provide bipartisan support to address domestic violence in the ACT in order to begin the long road we have to travel on breaking the cycles of violence that we know affect many families in our community.

We have begun this difficult work in consultation with both our local sector and national bodies. Some of the responses we have begun have been outlined in the ACT government budget for 2015-16, which included a statement on domestic violence and a paper on social inclusion and equality which highlighted the ways in which the government is countering violence against women and their children.

For example, the government has provided additional funding to expand the capacity of three key domestic and sexual violence crisis services. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Canberra Men's Centre will share in \$250,000 to handle the current spike in demand for crisis assistance.

As Minister for Women I know that a justice response is important. But to focus solely on what happens after violence is not good enough. I want us to focus on addressing violence, not just responding to it. For this reason I am strongly supportive of programs like the family violence intervention program. The family violence intervention program is a key element of how we try to address violence and work with victims once violence has occurred. The attorney has already spoken more generally about the program, but I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the role that the Community Services Directorate plays in the work of this program.

Representatives of the child and youth protection service in the Community Services Directorate attend the meetings of the Family Violence Intervention Program Coordinating Committee. This involvement provides a valuable opportunity for the child and youth protection service to participate in the weekly case tracking process. Case tracking seeks to ensure that those families who are affected by family violence are connected to and supported by services and assisted through the court process. It also provides an opportunity to identify children who may be at risk of abuse and neglect, which means that a safety net can be created for vulnerable children and young people and their families. This support is important to the process.

The FVIP has provided opportunities to highlight the need for improved workforce development and training to ensure that those who respond first, including care and protection workers, are provided with the skills and training to be able to respond in the best possible way to ensure the safety of children and young people and non-offending parents. The Community Services Directorate and the government recognise that responding at the earliest possible opportunity in family violence matters is more effective, and that this early response should include providing those involved with practical and emotional support.

It is also vital that this support is long term and sustained and that the response and support seek to prevent further incidents of violence. In addition, an ongoing response can assist the child and youth protection service to maintain children in their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

I would also like to briefly mention the recent establishment of the Coordinator-General for Domestic and Family Violence in the ACT. The Attorney-General and I announced the appointment of Justice and Community Safety Directorate Deputy Director-General Vicki Parker to the role on 1 June this year. The coordinator-general will make sure that all government reform programs and initiatives are consistent with the key actions outlined in the ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy 2011-17. This will help the government to make sure that services are working together across government and meeting the needs of every woman and child who has experienced or is experiencing domestic and family violence.

The coordinator-general has already started working with directorates and key stakeholders like the family violence intervention program to make sure that responses to domestic and family violence, including sexual assault, are effective, innovative and integrated where possible.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the upcoming launch of the second implementation plan for the ACT prevention of violence against women and children strategy 2011-17. In August 2011 the then Minister for Women and the Attorney-General co-signed the ACT strategy. The second implementation plan, which the Attorney-General and I will officially launch on 17 August 2015, articulates the ACT government's ongoing commitment to address domestic and family violence, including sexual assault. The second implementation plan also aligns with the second action plan under the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-22.

The second implementation plan sets out clear actions to improve programs, services and systems that support families experiencing or at risk of domestic or family violence, including sexual assault. It also recognises that this type of violence affects people's ability to participate actively in their communities. Accordingly, the actions outlined in the second implementation plan support our government's focus on social inclusion and equality.

The ACT government recognises that this issue affects our whole community and requires a whole-of-community response. Accordingly, the ACT government will be working collaboratively with the community sector and service providers over the next two years to progress the key actions in the second implementation plan and to ensure that we are all working towards a culture that is safe, respectful and just for all.

I think all proposals are worth consideration in how we tackle domestic violence, but as a government we have a responsibility to look at them in the context of their system and the people they are developed to support. I would like to again thank Mr Hanson for the opportunity to talk about the way the government is working to support everyone who is affected by violence in our community.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.45): I thank members for their contributions and for the spirit in which members have brought this forward. But when it comes to the amendments from Mr Corbell that are before us, in essence they say, "We're not going to act; we're going to consider." It seems that everybody I have spoken to thinks that this is the way to go. Mr Rattenbury just said that he broadly thinks this is the way to go; everybody thinks that is the case, particularly those on the front line.

As I said in my speech previously, this does not mean that this just gets done ad hoc. It does need to be done correctly. It does need to be done in a way that adopts best practice and learnings from other jurisdictions. I have made it very clear that I am not trying today to dictate what the model would be, what the resourcing would be or what the specific arrangements in the court would be. That is a further body of work that needs to be done by the government and the court in adopting that, and I think everybody would agree with that.



The clear point today is that we have a choice before us as to whether the decision is to take action and say, “Yes, we believe this is the way to go. There is clearly work to be done, there is a body of work that needs to be established, but we as an Assembly agree that we are going to do this.” That is one option, option A, which is what I am proposing. Option B is, “No, we will simply consider.”

Considering anything can result in one of two courses of action: you either do it or you do not. So what we are saying today is that we are not sure. We are not actually saying we are going to do this; we are just going to consider it. Maybe the government will consider it and decide not to do it. Maybe they will consider it and decide that they will do it. But if everybody is saying, “Look, we want to do this,” why is it that we are not prepared in this place today to say, “Let’s do it,” while accepting that there quite a bit of water that needs to flow under the bridge in terms of developing a model and implementing it in the courts?

I have circulated an amendment to one of Mr Corbell’s amendments. I have adopted the words that he put forward in his amendment. I have not tried to change any of his intent in terms of what he thinks should be achieved. What I have simply suggested, in essence, is to remove the word “consideration” and substitute the word “reform”.

With respect to the decision that is before us on these matters, I am very happy to adopt the government’s words, but the choice before us is about whether we are just going to consider this or whether we are going to implement the reform that those on the front line are considering.

I am doing what I can to work in the spirit of what the Assembly wants, and to adopt the words put forward by the government. The only nuance is about this: is this a place where we are going to lead; is this a place where we are going to implement the action and say, “Let’s do it”—pending, of course, the detail—or are we simply going to consider it? I know that those on the front line and, I am sure, those victims, would rather see reform in this area than simply more talk and more consideration, with ambiguous outcomes. If we do not have that word “reform”, there is nothing that says this will ever occur in the ACT, despite what they say.

In the spirit of bipartisanship I will accept the amendments moved by Mr Corbell, as long as they contain my simple amendment. With that in mind, I move the amendment to Mr Corbell’s amendment No (2) that has been circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “ACT Government to”, substitute “reform the Family Violence Court to include civil domestic violence orders, as well as a full-time, dedicated magistrate to domestic and family violence matters, as part of its broader legislative reform program.”.

Question put:

That **Mr Hanson’s** amendment to **Mr Corbell’s** proposed amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

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

Question so resolved in the negative.

Question put:

That **Mr Corbell's** amendments be agreed to.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The question now is that Mr Hanson's motion, as amended, be agreed to.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.54): I thank members for their contributions today, but I express disappointment that, rather than the Assembly taking action, rather than implementing what those on the front line of domestic violence are calling for, in essence there is no decision.

The rub is that we have all spoken in this place and acknowledged that a domestic violence court, reform in the court, is needed, is called for and is the way to go, but what we are seeing is procrastination and no decision, and ultimately there is no commitment that this will come to pass. We have simply the word "consideration", and that is in my view a letdown. Those people who have been calling for this, who believe that this will make the difference required, will have a right to feel let down.

It is good that we are talking about it. It is good that we have now expressed that this will be a part of consideration and that it will come under active consideration, but it is not what the community on the front line are calling for. I think it is a missed opportunity. Again I am disappointed that it has not come to pass.

I look forward to the continuing conversation, however. I continue to support many of the things that the government is doing in this space. I look forward to 17 August, when the second implementation plan is released, and I intend to be at that launch. I hope to be able to support all of the initiatives that are included in that package. This issue will obviously continue to enjoy bipartisan or tripartisan support. But it seems today that in this place, although we have taken a small step, we have failed the test, and that does disappoint.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Renewable energy

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (10.57): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Federal Government has issued a draft directive banning the Clean Energy Finance Corporation from investing in new wind farms and small scale solar projects;
- (b) that in contrast, the ACT Government has established a nation-leading target of 90% renewable energy generation by 2020;
- (c) the ACT is on track to achieving this target and is expected to secure 65% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2017;
- (d) the ACT Government has announced that it will undertake a second wind energy reverse auction later this year to secure more renewable energy generation toward the 90% target; and
- (e) by continuing to invest in renewable energy the ACT will benefit from significant economic and jobs growth, with the first wind auction securing \$50 million in direct investment and \$240 million in broader economic benefits for the ACT; and

(2) calls on the Federal Government to stop their continued attacks on renewable energy which is putting renewable energy jobs and projects at risk.

I am pleased to move this motion today. For a long time we on this side have held the view that the debate on whether climate change is real was settled long ago. The debate has now shifted to what is the most effective and efficient action we can collectively take to address this very real and critical challenge. That is why this Labor government has made a conscious decision to be a responsible global citizen and do the right thing, because it is time for action, not for retreat. However, since the coalition formed government federally in 2013, things have changed for the worse. We are now witnessing a so-called grown-up government moving Australia back to the Dark Ages. The Prime Minister has come out openly and aligned himself and his government to the coal industry. He is on record as having stated when opening a new coal mine in Central Queensland late last year that “coal is good for humanity”. He went on to prophesise that coal will be the world’s main energy source for decades to come.

Do these statements from the Prime Minister of Australia pass the sniff test? The powering up against poverty study, a report by Oxfam, a leading organisation in its field, does not agree. The report argues that, contrary to the Prime Minister’s statement, the continued embrace of coal exports is out of step with an international shift towards clean energy. It stresses that embracing coal would do little to help those who do not have electricity to light their homes or cook food. The report goes on to

confirm that coal is the single biggest contributor to climate change and that the impacts are felt most by poorer people through events such as floods, droughts, cyclones and changes to food patterns. How would this be good for humanity, or did the Prime Minister mean that embracing coal is good for profits?

With such a biased record in favour of coal and against renewable energy it came as no surprise when the Prime Minister issued a directive banning the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the CEFC, from investing in new wind farms and small-scale solar projects. This is on the back of the government attempting for a second time in March 2014 to abolish the CEFC, but the legislation was blocked in the Senate. This directive, along with the funding reduction this federal government has forced on the Australian Renewable Energy Agency—ARENA—is undoubtedly irresponsible, short sighted and based on ignorance. This cannot be said to be the actions of a responsible government.

By acting in this manner the federal government fail to see the social and economic importance of embracing renewable energy and the detrimental effect of their actions. They failed to acknowledge that the status quo cannot continue. They ultimately fail to understand that refusing to believe in climate change and its causes does not stop it happening. The head-in-the sand approach never worked.

Let me outline what responsible leaders and governments do when they are faced with long-term threats such as those we are faced with today. You only have to look at what this Labor government is doing to see an example of this. We recognise that not only does investing in renewable energy play an important role in addressing climate change but it also ensures that we develop and take advantage of the skills, technology and jobs that come with it.

We have not only established a nation-leading target of 90 per cent renewable energy generation by 2020, but the actions we have taken so far have placed the ACT well on track to achieve this target. We know wind is the lowest cost renewable energy generation available, and that will play a major role in achieving our target. The 200 megawatt wind auction undertaken by this government has secured some of Australia's best wind resources so that renewable energy can be delivered to the Canberra community at the lowest possible price. Only recently we were pleased to learn that Renewable Energy Systems, RES, one of the three winners in the wind auction, was successful in securing funds, becoming the second to achieve this. When the project is completed, RES will provide enough renewable energy to power around 37,000 houses in Canberra, which will help reduce the territory's emissions by approximately 260,000 tonnes per annum by 2020.

You will be glad to know that RES has also committed to the renewable in schools program, which is part of the ACT government's renewable energy industry development strategy. Ten schools have been selected as part of this program, which will enable them to reduce their carbon footprint. Canberra high, which is in my electorate and your electorate, Mr Assistant Speaker, and the Theodore Primary School in Brindabella are set to be the first carbon neutral schools. Others in my electorate to benefit from this initiative include Evatt and Weetangera primary schools.

Apart from reducing the territory's carbon footprint, jobs are being created as well. We are seeing major international energy companies investing in Canberra: Neoen France is establishing their wind energy headquarters to service their investments across the Asia-Pacific region, and RES UK is partnering with local company Windlab to provide asset management services. Windlab will also establish a global renewable energy operation hub in Canberra that will service two of the successful proposals, Ararat and Coonooer Bridge. These new operations, including the new operation headquarters to be established in Canberra, will create high skilled and high paid jobs, reflecting Canberra's position as a knowledge economy and providing significant multiplier effects in terms of economic benefit.

The Canberra skills training sector will also grow with the establishment of a national renewable energy skills centre of excellence at CIT. Through the centre, CIT will greatly expand their training services to the national and international student market. The Australian National University will establish Australia's first wind energy masters course, which will attract new national and international students to live and study in Canberra.

Solar energy is another renewable technology, and this government is investing in this to complement the work being done to tap wind-generated energy. The government recently received a remarkable response to the ACT's next generation solar expression of interest process, indicating a significant industry demand for new opportunities in this area as well. Three large-scale solar farms, the Royalla Solar Farm, Mugga Lane Solar Park, and the OneSun solar farm, will be constructed and set to generate around 77,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year, which is enough to power 10,000 households.

Examples such as these show that this is a government that is willing to embrace the future, and by taking this action has positioned the ACT as leaders in the renewable energy sector. These actions have been recognised both nationally and globally, with the reverse solar auction process winning the most prestigious environmental award in the country, the Banksia Foundation gold award. As you know, Mr Assistant Speaker, we are a small jurisdiction. However, we are proud that we are leading not just in the conversation but, more importantly, in taking action.

This is an important time for renewable energy not only in the ACT but globally. We are seeing solar and wind resources growing rapidly across the world, but it will take leadership to realise the full benefits. Real leaders with vision are looking at the vast array of scientific data available to all of us and are using the information to take the necessary actions that will benefit both individuals and the world as a whole. It is only by doing this that the future of our children and their children can be secured. One day they will thank us for the responsible decisions we make now.

Only this week we saw the President of the United States of America unveil the clean power plan, a comprehensive plan that the USA will embark on in coming years. In this speech, President Obama outlined the first-ever carbon pollution standards for existing power plants, which he says will put the USA on a path towards 32 per cent reduction in carbon pollution by 2030 and will achieve this by increasing renewable energy generation by 30 per cent by 2030. This is leadership, and guess what? The coal industry is lining up to resist Obama's reforms.

I will talk about a couple of stories that are really heart warming. Recently on the ABC's *Foreign Correspondent* program I saw an Australian renewable energy company, Pollinate Energy, founded by five young Australians, making a difference in India. Pollinate Energy co-founder Ms Kate Kimmorley stated that 400 million people are living in Indian slums who do not have access to electricity. She said these people face many problems, one of them being the lack of electricity, and she added that something as simple as a light could change someone's life in many ways. By providing a light children are going to school and mums are working in the evening. Before they had to see by using a dangerous kerosene lamp or even no light, but certainly poor light at best.

I am also reminded of a TED Talk program I watched recently featuring a 13-year-old Kenyan young man, Richard Turere, who lives in the Kenyan savannah next to a natural park. To save his parents' cattle from lions, Turere applied his self-taught skills in electronics to invent a practical way to achieve this. He figured out how to fix and make electronics through dismantling several thousand appliances and eventually invented the lion lights. By emitting intermittent light flashes, Turere can convince the lions which were after his family's cattle that it was best to stay away. Turere used solar panels to charge the car battery that powered the lights. At the end of his talk he states:

I used to hate lions, but now because my invention is saving my father's cows and the lions, we are able to stay with the lions without any conflict.

That is leadership. Not only has he saved his family's cattle but also those of many more farmers as his idea is adopted by many more. These two examples show that renewable energy is transforming the lives of the most marginalised. It is enabling them to improve their way of life by alleviating the health impacts of burning fossil fuels and wood fires in the home, and saving the family's livelihood in the case of Turere.

As I stated in my speech earlier, it shows real leadership to make a difference. This can be done in small ways or it can be done in very significant ways. Australia has an opportunity to provide leadership in finding solutions. It is in consideration of all this that we urge the federal government to stop their continued attack on renewable energy which is putting renewable energy jobs, projects and research at great risk and taking us back—excuse the pun—light years.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (11.10): I would like to thank Ms Porter for bringing forward her motion today. Her motion speaks to the importance of switching to renewable energy generation as part of our plan for a low carbon future as a city, making sure that consumers are not held hostage to higher cost energy generation into the future—that is, higher cost fossil fuel energy generation—and, importantly, recognising the significant economic benefits that will flow to our city as a result of investing in large-scale renewable energy generation now.

Ms Porter's motion also talks about the ongoing partisan and destabilising approach of the federal government when it comes to the renewable energy sector and the impact that is having on jobs and investment certainty in what is one of the largest growing parts of the global economy. The transition to renewable energy is transforming economies globally, and billions and billions of dollars are being invested in renewable energy around the world.

Regrettably, the position being adopted by the federal government, in its attacks on wind energy generation and its draft directive to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to cease investment in wind and solar, means that Australia is missing out on investment in renewable energy and is missing out on that multibillion dollar transformation that is occurring globally. That means we are missing out on jobs, we are missing out on the technical expertise that comes with that investment, and we are missing out on one of the most significant changes to the global economy that has been seen in the last century.

Here in the ACT, we are charting a different course. Here in the ACT, we have started from the premise that as a city and as a community we need to make our contribution a fair and proportionate contribution to reducing the impact of our economy on the global climate. We have established strong greenhouse gas reduction targets that reflect the science and are now increasingly considered best practice across cities and regions globally when it comes to the contribution that city and regional economies can make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

That 40 per cent reduction target on the 1990 level informs the approach we adopt as a city and as a community to renewable energy. Renewable energy is therefore the heavy lifter of the ACT's greenhouse gas reduction effort. Our 90 per cent renewable energy target has been recognised nationally and internationally as a leadership position that other cities and regions are increasingly referring to. It will deliver almost three-quarters of the emissions reductions needed to meet our legislated greenhouse gas reduction target.

Seventy per cent of the renewable energy generation needed to achieve that target will come from large-scale renewable energy generators that will be supported through our large-scale feed-in tariff program. The balance will be achieved through smaller scale generation, most notably the contributions of the now wound back renewable energy target federally and rooftop solar here in the ACT, the percentage of which continues to grow each and every year.

The ACT has embarked on a very ambitious program through our large-scale feed-in tariff law administered through a reverse auction process. We have adopted this process because it is one of the most effective and timely ways to deliver large-scale renewable energy projects on the ground. It is a mechanism that is understood by the banks, understood by the finance institutions and understood by investors. It gives them certainty and confidence to invest. That is in marked contrast to the lack of certainty and the lack of confidence that have been instilled in the industry by the actions of the federal Liberal government.

The reverse auction mechanism makes sure that ACT electricity consumers get value for money and the lowest cost renewable energy at the best possible price. It ensures there is competitive tension between those renewable energy developers competing in the auction process. In our first solar auction process, we saw very competitive bids. Indeed, those bids blew away expectations by achieving a weighted average price of 18c per kilowatt hour for large-scale solar, the same price households in the ACT pay for electricity from the grid.

At the time of announcing the success of the Royalla Solar Farm proposal there was a very reputable finance journalist who wrote that the facility could not be delivered at that bid price. I am pleased to say that we have proven them wrong. Go out to Royalla today. It is on the ground, it is generating carbon-free electricity and it is delivering at the price bid.

In February this year, the government built on the success of the solar auction process by announcing the three winning proposals from the government's 200-megawatt reverse wind auction. Those three projects, two in Victoria and one in South Australia, will deliver some of the best wind resources for the ACT community. That keeps to our commitment that large-scale renewables should be delivered at the lowest possible price for consumers. With prices as low as 8c per kilowatt hour, the wind auction has delivered record low prices for renewable energy.

This is all in marked contrast to the position of the federal Liberal government, who are doing everything possible to unwind effective action and support for the transition to renewable energy. They have wrecked national investment in renewables, but because of that we have been a beneficiary. All of a sudden the ACT has become the only game in town, and national and international renewable energy investors are taking significant interest in the ACT's processes.

As a result, competition drove prices down and pushed up innovation. Businesses have come to our city, as they see it as a safe home for their headquarters, for investing in our research institutions as natural partners, for investing in education and trades training centres, and as an ideal base to train the next generation of renewable energy workers. And as a result we have seen the ANU establish Australia's first wind energy masters course, attracting new national and international students to live and study in Canberra. We have seen investment in Canberra's skills training sector, with the establishment of the national renewable energy skills centre of excellence at our very own Canberra Institute of Technology.

And local Canberra businesses are also the beneficiaries, because they are getting opportunities to tender on all the work packages, building on the significant local capacity here in Canberra in engineering, consulting and construction. The innovative Canberra-based company Windlab is directly benefiting and will continue its growth as a growing national and international player in wind energy development and resource mapping, providing asset management services across the country and around the world—all from their headquarters here in Canberra.



Indeed, the total amount of investment, the total amount of turnover in that business, that we will see over the next 20 years because of their success in the wind auction process is over \$240 million of activity in the ACT economy. That is all because of a favourable and certain policy setting that makes a shift to a low carbon future. On 15 July this year I was very pleased to announce that, following on from the success of the first wind auction, the ACT will hold a second auction. I expect a faster turnaround for this process, and I will be announcing the details of those time frames very shortly.

As the Prime Minister's tax on renewables continues, he is undermining his own recently minted but significantly reduced renewable energy target. He has made it clear that the only reason the commonwealth target exists is resistance from the majority of senators. With a federal election due by the end of next year, the renewable energy industry remains in significant doldrums. My call to the renewable energy industry is clear: the ACT supports the development of your projects; we see economic and environmental benefit from it; and we want you to consider joining our high skill, dynamic, knowledge-based economy.

There is much more I could talk about today, but time prevents me from doing so. I commend Ms Porter's motion to the Assembly. (*Time expired.*)

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (11.21): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. Renewable energy is an important issue for all Canberrans and it is often hotly debated in all jurisdictions. I move:

Omit all words after "notes that", substitute:

- “(a) the Federal Government has issued a draft directive to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation for it to focus on emerging technologies;
- (b) the Federal Government has announced a commitment of a renewable energy target of 33 000 gigawatt hours of annual renewable energy production;
- (c) the ACT Government has legislated an ambitious target of 90% renewable energy generation by 2020;
- (d) the ACT Government's renewable energy target is the highest of any Australian jurisdiction;
- (e) the ACT Government claims to be on track to achieve this target and expects to secure 65% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2017;
- (f) the ACT Government has announced that it will undertake a second wind energy reverse auction in late 2015 to secure more renewable energy generation towards its 90% target; and

- (g) the Federal Government's renewable energy target of 33 000 gigawatt hours of annual renewable energy production by 2020 will give certainty to the renewable energy sector and encourage jobs and economic growth in the sector; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to provide detail and report back to the Assembly in September 2015 on its progress:
  - (a) towards achieving its set target of 90% renewable energy generation by 2020; and
  - (b) towards achieving its set target of 65% renewable energy generation by 2017."

The federal government announced earlier this year a commitment to a renewable energy target of 33,000 gigawatt hours of annual renewable energy production. This gives some certainty to the renewable energy sector and encourages jobs and economic growth in the sector.

We have heard from some of the speakers so far this morning about the uncertainty about jobs in the sector because of federal government policy, but I would like to quote from an Australian Bureau of Statistics document from April of this year called *Employment in renewable energy activities, Australia, 2013-14*. This document says:

Local government policies also have the potential to influence employment in renewable energy activities.

It goes on to give some ACT examples. It says:

The net effect of the interaction of federal, state/territory and local government policies with regard to the renewable energy thus varies by location and over time.

The thrust of Ms Porter's original motion this morning was to try and blame the federal government for everything that happens in the entire world. I do not think that is particularly fair. We in the ACT have a good commitment to renewable energy. That has been legislated to a target of 90 per cent renewable energy generation by 2020. The ACT government has announced that it expects to secure 65 per cent of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2017.

The thrust of my amendment today is to ask for the detail of those claims. It would be good to see the analysis behind them. We would like to see the detail and analysis behind these commitments that the ACT government has made. The amendment that has been circulated in my name today encapsulates much of Ms Porter's original motion but simply asks for more detail about the analysis of progress. I am sure transparency of this information is something this government would support. We would like to see the detail and analysis of tracking towards achieving the set target of 90 per cent of renewable energy generation by 2020 and achieving the claimed 65 per cent renewable energy generation target by 2017.

The Canberra Liberals are not opposed to renewable energy. I agree with some of Ms Porter's comments. Comments by some—for example, that coal is good for humanity—and criticisms of wind farms as being unattractive or a blight on the landscape are not helpful or useful. I disagree with those comments. But on clean energy, the CEFC directive, Mr Abbott himself said that it is not useful to invest in established technologies that can easily attract private funding. As long ago as 2010, Mr Corbell said:

... the ACT Government is ... focusing on large scale renewable energy generation.

Mr Corbell went on to say that “we’re shifting our emphasis to large scale renewable energy generation,” which includes large-scale rooftop, “on office buildings and factories and so on and to proper large scale solar farms as well”. Yet when the federal Liberal government agrees that the focus for the CEFC should not include technologies that are quite common today and should focus instead on innovation, Mr Corbell and his colleagues are quick to criticise.

In conclusion, the amendment, which encapsulates much of the original motion, is calling on the ACT government to provide a progress report on how it is tracking towards achieving its set target of 90 per cent renewable energy generation by 2020 and the claim of 65 per cent renewable energy generation by 2017. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

**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) (11.26): Thank you for bringing on this motion. What a contrast it paints between policies which look to the future and those which look to the past. At both the territory and federal levels of government there is a great gap between the major parties as Labor looks to a lower carbon future with new jobs, new technologies and new export opportunities while the Liberal Party stands in the way of job creation and greenhouse gas reduction.

Here in the ACT our community believes the science on climate change and believes in taking action. Some three in four Canberrans see it as important for the ACT government to take action, to tackle climate change. And 81 per cent support the ACT government taking a strong leadership role. More than 90 per cent support the government's plan to demonstrate and promote new energy technology. It is safe to say that this includes solar and wind energy technologies.

It seems that most people do not find these energy sources as offensive as the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, or Treasurer Hockey do. It is particularly good to hear today that Ms Lawder also does not share the views of Mr Hockey or Mr Abbott. Most people can see far enough ahead to know that for the good of future generations the time to lower carbon levels is now. Australian can and should be a global leader in this movement. We have been described as the Saudi Arabia of renewable energy sources if we are smart enough to make the most of them.

I am proud that our government, led by the Minister for the Environment, has taken such a strong approach to renewable energy. We see renewable energy as an opportunity to create jobs and to build a stronger, more diverse and cleaner ACT economy. It is the smart states and the early movers who stand to gain from the growth in the global renewable energy industry, an industry that is expecting \$7 trillion in investment during the next 20 years. Renewable energy jobs in the ACT have increased fourfold in the past five years. One local commercial and residential solar installer has grown from two to 22 employees in less than two years.

The prices the government is achieving for consumers are showing the great strengths of our policies in this area. The wind and solar auction processes, combined with the current ideal market conditions, are driving lower costs per megawatt hour than forecast originally. As a result of this lower unit pricing, the cost to the territory in pursuing our 90 per cent target has actually come down, and we expect that market conditions will continue to drive down costs. In 2020 our large-scale investments will reduce Canberra's total emissions by 1.2 million tonnes, around 25 per cent. Of course, the government continues to push for further advances, for example through the next-generation solar EOI process recently announced.

Australians have come to understand, despite the current federal government, that we can all do our bit for a cleaner future. Households have installed rooftop solar in their hundreds of thousands. New businesses have established to pursue the great commercial opportunities. Workers and trade unions have seen the need to prepare for transition, and are calling on their governments to lead it. The adjustment will not be easy for coal-based regional economies, such as Latrobe Valley, but everyone, including the workers, knows that the best response is to prepare for change and not simply put your head in the sand.

I want to note that pursuing energy efficiency is an important part of new developments and maintenance activities in Housing ACT. As members know, Housing ACT's capital program funds replacement properties as well as the upgrade and refurbishment of existing properties. Included in this is a range of works to improve the energy efficiency of the dwellings, particularly improvement to the thermal qualities of the home.

One of the greatest drawbacks of our old housing stock is the difficulty of keeping homes warm on cold days like today. That is why Housing regularly carries out works to install ceiling and wall insulation and to seal against drafts to help tenants keep energy use and costs down. Five-star gas and solar hot-water systems have been installed in more than 700 dwellings, together with water-saving devices in toilets and showers. As I said yesterday during the MPI, encouraging active transport by locating public housing close to walking and cycling networks is also a feature of Housing ACT's work.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what is emerging is a picture, particularly here in the ACT but across Australia, where more and more people across our community are embracing the possibilities of renewable energy. There is a similar theme internationally, with recent commitments such as those that have just been made in the United States.

As I said, when local people are asked if they want their governments to lead this change, there is a resounding “yes”. I look forward to the ACT government continuing its nation-leading work on renewable energy, growing high-tech jobs in Canberra, and showing others the way. I hope that all members can get behind Mr Corbell’s motion to send a united call to the federal government that we expect better leadership from them.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (11.32): On 14 October 2014 the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, came out with a most astounding comment. He said, while opening a new \$3.9 billion coal mine in central Queensland, that coal was “good for humanity”. He said coal would be the world’s main energy source for decades to come. Tony Abbott is, admittedly, one of the most conservative prime ministers this country has ever seen. Conservative politicians are proudly stuck in the past, and Tony Abbott demonstrated that through these comments. He is well and truly stuck in the last century, perhaps the century before. By these comments he admits he is not only conservative but also poorly read, poorly informed and poorly advised in the politics of climate change.

It is almost untenable in this day and age for a political leader of any country to pin their flag so tightly to the mast of a fuel source that is fast becoming to the planet what cancer is to human beings. It is bizarre that he is so blatant in his support of coal, given where the debate on climate change is up to. What is even more bizarre is his total alienation of the cause of renewable energy.

In June this year the Prime Minister proudly lauded the government’s success of reducing the renewable energy target, almost lamenting that the cuts were not deeper. He described wind farms as visually awful and proudly espoused that he had been able to reduce “the number of these things”, as if wind turbines were aliens landing from Mars and he was almost distressed that he was not able to stop more of them. He said:

Frankly, it’s right and proper that we have reduced the renewable energy target because as things stood, there was going to be an explosion of these things right around our country.

Abbott also passed judgement on the noise of wind farms saying:

... there’s no doubt, not only are they visually awful, they make a lot of noise.

He also raised the potential health impacts of “these things”. It is an old argument and a useful one for those who want to plant the seeds of doubt in the minds of locals living near wind projects. The coalition have moved during this term to further investigate the health effects of wind farms, stepping up their attacks on the industry in the face of no evidence of health effects. Another half a million dollars has been allocated to study low frequency noise nonetheless. One can only hope that, assuming the research into wind energy delivers the same outcome as it normally does, the

witch-hunt on wind might ease. But it probably will not because our Prime Minister has an ideological objection to renewable energy that is shared by his senior colleagues. The attacks on wind will only slow in the polls in the right seats clearly indicate that it is unpopular.

The Treasurer, Joe Hockey, of course, famously made headlines by saying that he thinks wind farms are utterly offensive and Maurice Newman, the Prime Minister's business adviser, calls them a crime against the people. Nowhere do I hear that the well-documented impacts of coal mines and the planet-destroying impacts of burning coal as a fuel are a crime against humanity. Here we are on the cusp of a climate catastrophe—one one that will cause massive disease impacts, displacement of people, and significant impacts on agriculture and food security—and our federal national Liberal government thinks wind farms are causing health problems. Honestly, they ought to be ashamed of themselves, and their colleagues in this chamber should be equally ashamed of this sort of level of public discourse and this ideological hatred of the source of energy that this planet really needs. They are an embarrassment to the political debate on climate change and the debate on how we plan for a secure and safe energy future for this country and for this planet.

I understand the Prime Minister's rhetoric on renewables on both a political and financial front. Politically, if I may say so, his attitude verges on the ridiculous and politically naive. Even his predecessor, John Howard, understood that while he could support and advocate for coal, you should never forget to pay homage to renewables generally, and solar specifically, as a form of political insulation. It was John Howard who introduced the fledgling mandatory renewable energy target. It was John Howard who gave the federal rebates on small-scale solar. This was because John Howard realised the people actually love solar. If he gave small amounts of cash for it and helped along a fledgling industry with a meagre two per cent target, he kept the wolves from the door. It was classic Howard politics, but it actually assisted some of those industries get underway. Ultimately it did not work and climate change ended up being part of his downfall, but at least it gave him and his colleagues something to talk about when the renewable energy topic came up.

Perhaps one could assume that the Prime Minister and his colleagues are all singing from the same song sheet because they all have dinner together and have reached a collective view that wind farms specifically and renewables generally are bad news. Unfortunately the truth is probably a lot more grounded in reality than that. The truth is that renewables are a genuine threat to coal in the medium and certainly the long term. That is scary news to any federal coalition or ALP government, because Australia is on the teat when it comes to coal, and giving it up is going to be tough. Indeed, the rest of the Prime Minister's outrageous comment that coal was good for humanity was, in fact:

Coal is good for humanity. Coal is good for prosperity. Coal is an essential part of our economic future, here in Australia, and right around the world.

It is true that global demand for coal is still growing, although the rate of that growth is slowing. China, Japan and Korea are big players in that. In spite of China's policies to shift energy sources away from coal over the next five years, it is likely that their

use of coal—about half the global use—will not peak in the next five years. Australia is a good source of coal for these countries. It is these countries that are financing the development of new coal mines in Australia, which, by the way, they are seeking to develop on prime agricultural land in New South Wales and Queensland.

Coal plays a significant role in the economic wellbeing of Australia, but that does not make it right. I guess these figures provide enough comfort to the federal government about the future of coal. But five years is not a long time, and I suggest they need to look further ahead than that and plan for the next 10, 20 even 50 years. They may think scaring off investors in renewables is not much of an issue at the moment, but that is only because they have not faced up to the reality yet. They have convinced themselves we can go on as we are for decades and decades and that it is not their problem. They live that reality. They are surrounded by people who believe it, too, but the bottom line is that they are in denial.

Federal Labor perhaps is not in quite such denial, despite their difficulties giving up the black stuff and despite their support for the “dig it up and ship it out as fast as we can” policies on coal exports. At least federal Labor have the good grace to look like they care about transitioning to renewables. At least they have the political smarts on this issue to realise that you put the renewables first and talk about coal exports later. That does not make them or their state Labor colleagues in Queensland any less complicit in the destruction of prime farming land for coal mines or the investment in new coal port infrastructure.

Of course, what we are hoping is that the divestment movement catches up with the coal developers and financiers. The notion that the world’s financial markets are carrying a carbon bubble has been well outlined by the Carbon Tracker Initiative’s report *Unburnable Carbon*. The report outlined the risk to global investments in fossil fuels, coal, gas and oil through the action of governments implementing their climate change policies. It effectively describes that if the world is to stay below two degrees of warming, only a certain amount of fossil fuels can be burnt. The rest of it must stay in the ground.

However, the total carbon dioxide potential of the planet’s fossil fuel reserves is more than five times the amount budgeted to stay below two degrees, and burning even the list of reserves held by the top 100 listed coal companies and the top 100 listed oil and gas companies takes us beyond two degrees of global warming. Investors are, therefore, left exposed to the risk of unburnable carbon.

This has significant implications for Australia’s coal sector in particular, as it is estimated that our coal reserves owned by listed companies account for 51 gigatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents. We hear a lot of discussion about a property bubble, but this notion of a carbon bubble is a very important one to understand because it has significant implications for our superannuation industry right through all sorts of investment portfolios. If those companies own assets that the science tells us we cannot burn, that means they have stranded assets. There will be a point at which the financial reality of that will strike. That is why organisations like the Carbon Track Initiative and other organisations that analyse these things talk about a carbon bubble.

The crying shame in Australia is that both ALP and coalition federal governments over the past two decades have successively turned their back on managing the wholesale transition that we need to make away from coal and towards renewable—the sensible, sequenced transition that supports communities and workers, that builds new skills, that manages price loads for consumers and that invests in the right infrastructure.

What we are seeing from the coalition are the last death throes of politicians who are about to lose the debate on climate change and on transitioning to a clean energy future. Here is why: Australia may not be leading the way but the renewable energy game is well and truly underway. The price of renewable energy continues to drop, and the global investments being made are simply huge. In a record-breaking deal earlier this month NV Energy, a Nevada utility owned by Warren Buffet, has agreed on a purchase price of US3.87c a kilowatt hour for solar power from First Solar's 100 megawatt plan. That is an extraordinary price. Even going back five years I do not think many people would have dreamed that would be the case. But that is the leap forward we have seen in renewable energy technology and the game-changing reduction in price we have seen, particularly in solar.

Global investments in renewable energy have grown massively since 2004, and while there was a small dip in 2012 and 2013 green energy investments worldwide surged 17 per cent to \$270 billion in 2014. This plays out right around the world. China saw by far the biggest renewable energy investments in 2014—a record \$83.3 billion, up 39 per cent from 2013. The US was second at \$38 billion and Japan came third with over \$35 billion, its biggest total ever. A key feature of the 2014 result was the rapid expansion of renewables into new markets in developing countries. Investment in developing countries was at \$131 billion, up 36 per cent on the previous year. We can see that globally the renewables industry is going gang busters—that is the only way to describe it. It is a bit colloquial, but I think it describes the situation.

Fortunately here in the ACT we have taken policies that have insulated ourselves from the impact of federal policies. We have been insulated from the debate of the renewable energy target that saw a massive drop in investment over 2013-14 as the federal government wound back the target from 41,000 gigawatt hours to 33,000 gigawatt hours. The ACT has been insulated in the main because our large-scale feed-in tariff scheme has been designed to sit outside the federal renewable energy target.

It is a good thing we insulated ourselves from the RET as the political fight over the target and what was going to happen to it resulted in a 90 per cent drop in investment in the 12 months up to 31 March 2015. That is basically investment totally stalled because, in the absence of clear policy, the industry simply hesitated; they did not invest. That has been one of the great travesties of renewable energy policy in Australia of the last two decades. We have seen continual change in policy. Labor and Liberal governments alike talk about the need for investor certainty, and yet they have completely moved back and forth on renewable energy policy. It has been to the detriment of the industry in Australia.



Now that the new target is agreed nationally, projects will be invigorated. But make no mistake: the reduced target will slow the uptake of renewables in Australia. Unfortunately, the policy only lasts until 2020, and who knows what will follow in terms of the policies that will be rolled out in the next two terms of federal government. The Greens have a policy to power Australia with at least 90 per cent renewable energy by 2030 by increasing the renewable energy target. This will give investors the certainty and stability they need to plan.

The federal ALP has recently announced a plan to deliver 50 per cent renewable by 2030, so at least renewable energy will be on the increase over the next decade if they are elected. But who knows what the coalition will come up with or what damage they will wreak during the decade by undoing ALP policies as they did with the carbon tax and the package that went with it.

As opposed to the federal government, here in the ACT we have also sent a strong message to the renewable sector that we are open for business and that we value the development of renewable energy sector. Our 40 per cent climate greenhouse reduction target with the 90 per cent renewable energy target has given that signal very clearly. At the federal level we are seeing the government repealing a carbon tax, wanting to abolish ARENA, wanting to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, cutting the renewable energy target and cutting funding for climate science at CSIRO.

Of course, if you are going to be a denier, you want to be consistent in not having the scientists point that out to you too clearly. The ACT stands alone as the only jurisdiction in Australia that has taken the science seriously with our 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction target, our 90 per cent renewable energy target and our carbon-neutral government by 2020 intention. I am proud to be a part of a government that is delivering those policy objections.

**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) (11.47): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is great to be able to rise today to talk about your motion and the serious issue of climate change across the world. All governments need to work together to overcome this issue of climate change. This government is committed to acting, despite the lack of commitment which emanates from the current federal government. Listening here today, I hear such commitment and fervour towards cutting emissions from this side of the chamber, and I commend my colleagues for this. What a contrasting set of ideas to Prime Minister Abbott's view that "the climate change argument is absolute crap".

The weather events that have already been seen around the world and in Australia show the dire need to reduce our carbon emissions. There is no denying it. Experts are as sure about climate change as they are about the negative effects of smoking. I will not go so far as to link Mr Abbott to questions about smoking's ill effects, but the level to which his climate denial is ridiculous is very evident.

This sort of message from the federal government causes uncertainty in the renewable market and costs jobs. The cost of the attitude of the Liberal Party currently stands at 2,300 jobs in the 2013-14 financial year alone. 800,000 jobs were created in the renewable energy sector globally between 2012 and 2013. In 2014 the US solar industry added over 31,000 new solar jobs, an increase of 21.8 per cent on the previous year. Jobs in the renewable energy sector fell by 13 per cent in Australia in 2013 while global employment grew by the same amount.

In 2014 clean energy investment grew in China by 32 per cent, in the United States by eight per cent, in Japan by 12 per cent, in Germany by three per cent and in the UK by three per cent. However, it fell by 35 per cent in Australia due to policy uncertainty from the Liberal Party.

It is currently more important than ever that the states and territories of this nation invest in and lead the way in the development of renewable energy. The comments made by both the Prime Minister and the Treasurer about the wind farm visible from the Federal Highway are simply astounding. I find the view of the wind farm from across Lake George to be graceful and enjoyable. It represents a massive feat of engineering and a sustainable future. In fact, generally it is amazing how far renewable energy technology has come in the last few decades. These technologies are now more productive than ever.

A 2014 report by the IPCC which came out in March of that year explains that in south-eastern Australia the impacts of climate change have already been seen on food production, terrestrial ecosystems and on aquatic ecosystems such as rivers and lakes as well. The federal Department of the Environment states that annual rainfall could decline by up to 10 per cent by 2030 and 25 per cent by 2070 in relation to 1990 levels. Given that water security has been an issue raised in this place in the past, the potential for future issues is very worrying.

This motion outlines the exciting fact that the ACT is on track to achieve a goal of 90 per cent of electricity from renewable sources by 2020. It is especially exciting that it is only five years away. In only two years from now we will be at least at 65 per cent—well over half. This will be achieved in part through the latest wind energy reverse auction due to be undertaken by the government later this year.

I am passionate about planning for the future of the ACT and this country, planning for generations who will take our places in the years to come. Renewable energy helps to secure this future for them. It was the forward thinking and planning by the ACT Labor government which led to the introduction of the original feed-in tariff in 2008. I was extremely proud to introduce this legislation and it is great to see the way in which it has helped the development of renewable energy in the ACT to where we stand today.

The ACT is doing well in its move towards renewable energy. Eighty-seven per cent of people surveyed by the Environment and Planning Directorate in 2013 were supportive of the government's plan for tackling emissions, and this is indicative of how strongly the community feels when it comes to tackling climate change. This is something that the federal government does not appear to understand.

The Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act provides the framework which enables capital investment into renewable energy generation to be recouped within a 10-year period. The Royalla solar farm project was made possible through further ACT legislation for large-scale renewable auctions. The solar farm was completed on 4 September last year and is the biggest solar farm in Australia. It produces 20 megawatts of clean, carbon-free electricity to the benefit of not only residents of the ACT but the wider global community. A second solar farm at Mugga Lane has received planning approval and will provide an additional seven megawatts of clean electricity for the territory.

The low emission vehicle strategy is another way that the ACT government is aiming to reduce emissions in the territory. The strategy will provide incentives for people to buy more efficient vehicles through large stamp duty reductions. Indeed exceptionally efficient vehicles and electric vehicles will be free of stamp duty altogether. The rise in the number of electric vehicles is great to see, and I was pleased when the government began purchasing electric vehicles for its fleet last year.

In 2011 transport accounted for 23 per cent of the ACT's emissions. A reduction in transport emissions needs to go hand in hand with the reduction in emissions which is already being achieved through projects facilitated by the feed-in tariff legislation. Indeed, when 2020 arrives and the ACT lives off 90 per cent renewable electricity, electric vehicles will also be 90 per cent fuelled by totally renewable electricity. The same can be said of light rail. The more electricity that is provided for the territory from renewable sources, the more efficient this electric form of mass transit becomes.

Renewable electricity production is beginning to take hold around the world. In the last 10 years we have seen more investment in solar, wind, hydro and geothermal technology. In the UK approximately 9.8 per cent of electricity is produced through wind farms, with many more proposals currently in the works. Wind farms in the UK produce a total of 13 gigawatts of electricity, 8,248 megawatts onshore and 5,054 offshore, from 6,536 individual wind turbines. I find the use of offshore wind turbines in the UK quite interesting. In a country with a reasonably high population density, it is a great way to make the most of those spatial resources.

I remember visiting Germany when I was looking into the feed-in tariff. I visited a company called Vattenfall, an electricity generator in Germany who were very concerned when the feed-in tariff was first brought in. But when I visited them in 2008 I was advised that they were investing heavily in offshore wind farms and bringing that energy back to the mainland.

Closer to home, South Australia is also moving towards greater production of renewable energy. The state has more than 550 megawatts of rooftop solar, with almost one in four houses having rooftop panels. As of August 2014 South Australia had around half of Australia's installed wind power capacity. This capacity totals 1,473 megawatts from more than 1,200 turbines across 16 separate wind farms and accounts for 27 per cent of the electricity demands of the state. It was through the rapid growth of wind power that South Australia was able to achieve 20 per cent renewable electricity as its goal well before time.

As we move into the future of energy production, I am convinced that the ACT will be able to continue investing in renewable energy to the benefit of our community, and the Australian community as well. This reduction in emissions will be helped not only through investment in wind, solar and other renewable energy technologies but through innovation which reduces the need for other forms of fossil fuels.

To sum up, I am very proud of the work which is being done by the ACT government to reduce emissions and progress investment in the renewable sector. The attacks on the sector by the federal government are worrying, and states and territories, along with the ACT, need to continue to work towards emission reductions. With that I commend the motion.

**MR BARR** (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.57): The need to move to smarter, lower polluting and more distributed energy sources is driving a revolution in the energy industry, and it will certainly unlock massive levels of investment over the next decade. Our city and our country need to build on our strengths and to lead innovation to benefit from the new jobs and export opportunities that this investment is going to deliver.

This morning I would like to speak about the significant economic benefits gained by the territory through the first wind auction and the broader benefits of continued renewable energy sector growth for businesses and education in the territory. First, Madam Deputy Speaker, your motion reflects that, at a time when the Prime Minister and his government have taken an axe to effective action on climate change and support for renewables, here in Canberra the ACT government is moving forward with the nation's most ambitious agenda of carbon reduction and energy change.

The commonwealth has slashed the national 2020 renewable energy target from 41 to 33 terawatt hours. It has repealed the carbon price which saw, for the first time in the nation's history, a reversal in growth of power station emissions. It has tried to abolish or hobble both the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. And as we have heard, the Prime Minister has claimed that coal "is good for humanity" whilst slamming wind energy as being "offensive".

At every opportunity, whilst the world has been going forward in leaps and bounds towards a cleaner energy future, the Liberal Party and the Abbott Liberal government have been going backwards, squandering this exceptional opportunity to lead innovation, create new jobs and drive investment. Our country is being left behind by the rest of the world's emission reduction initiatives.

Just this week President Obama issued new landmark regulations designed to shift the US power industry away from global warming inducing fossil fuels. His new regulations, administered by the US Environmental Protection Agency, will limit the carbon dioxide emissions that can be released by that nation's power plants. Under the new rules American states will have until 2018 to tell the EPA how they plan to meet individual emission reduction targets. Overall the rule aims to achieve a 32 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector on 2005 levels by 2030.

Australia has always been strong at harnessing our natural resources, but that no longer means just gas, oil and coal. Australia has some of the best renewable energy resources in the world and it is past time that we took full advantage of them. But our greatest competitive strength should be our capacity to innovate and to lead in research and development. We are an advanced knowledge economy, hungry to experiment, to innovate and to take new products and services to the global market.

Amid this national stagnation, Canberra has been taking the lead. We have committed to a real greenhouse gas abatement target, one that is consistent with the science. We have committed to a real renewable energy target that is achievable and affordable. Canberrans can be proud of the progress we have made and that our ambitious targets for 2020 are now in reach.

Canberra has emerged as an internationally recognised centre for renewable energy innovation and investment. Local renewable energy jobs have increased by 400 per cent over the last five years, at a time when national jobs in the sector have fallen. Over \$250 million of benefits are being delivered through the establishment of two new global operations centres here in Canberra. Millions more will flow from new private sector investments in trades training and tertiary education, getting the next generation of energy workers trained and into new jobs. One example, the Power Saving Centre here in Canberra, a local commercial and residential solar installation business, has grown from two to more than 22 employees in the last two years.

The benefits of new opportunity are being spread across our growing economy. It is feeding into tourism, hospitality and office services. The local investment benefits are many. Neoen, from France, have established their Asia-Pacific wind energy headquarters in Canberra and it will service their investments across the Asia-Pacific region. RES, from the UK, have partnered with local company Windlab to provide asset management services for wind farms, resulting in the establishment of Windlab's new global operations hub.

Our ongoing investment in renewable energy is also driving significant innovation, providing a platform for new ACT businesses and building links between the ACT's world-class education institutions and the energy industry. Renewable energy businesses have committed to, for example, developing a new ANU wind power masters course, and running a lecture program visiting every high school in the ACT to introduce renewable energy and its career opportunities.

These businesses will also establish a new CIT renewable energy skills centre of excellence, with nearly \$6 million of funding committed over the next 20 years. Canberra institutions such as the ANU's Energy Change Institute are leaders in their fields. We can leverage our local know-how and build a more diverse, export-oriented economy.

In order to help these businesses grow and to attract new business to the region, the ACT government has put in place a renewable energy industry development strategy. This strategy is focusing on solar, wind and energy storage, and combined with a

renewable energy precinct and test berth facilities, the strategy brings together a range of existing government renewable energy initiatives to accelerate the development of a renewable energy industry in the territory.

The strategy will benefit the ACT by attracting further renewable energy businesses to Canberra, linking research and training with industry groups and supporting the development of new and emerging ACT-based ventures. Twenty-five organisations with substantial international reach have already signed up as inaugural partners to the strategy, including General Electric, the ANU Energy Change Institute, Australian Capital Ventures, Siemens, Windlab and Vestas, amongst others.

The ACT's first wind auction, of course, broke national records in terms of low-cost renewable energy, with prices as low as 8c a kilowatt hour. This compares to current residential retail electricity prices of around 18c. As a result of the low prices achieved, the government has revised down the costs of achieving our 90 per cent renewable energy target by nearly 20 per cent from original estimates. Not only will these costs decline over time but the benefits of growing a vibrant, export-oriented local renewable energy industry will provide benefits that will grow for a generation.

Canberra's investment in renewable energy is returning substantial economic benefits to the territory. The ACT renewable energy auctions, together with our renewable energy industry development strategy, are stimulating over a \$1 billion of renewable energy infrastructure development, attracting large international businesses to the ACT and creating jobs that further diversify and strengthen the ACT economy.

In conclusion, it is time that our national government stopped attacking renewable energy and took a look at what is happening in the national capital. It is a shining example of what you can achieve by embracing a cleaner energy future. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for bringing this motion to the Assembly today.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (12.06): I will speak to Ms Lawder's amendment, which seeks to relitigate a number of arguments made by her federal Liberal colleagues. The first is that the directive to the Clean Energy Finance Corporation is about making sure there is a focus on emerging technologies and that somehow everything is all right with the directive because of that. Of course, that amendment reflects the fundamental misunderstanding those opposite and those in the federal government have about the role and the purpose of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

The corporation was set up to provide finance to mature renewable energy technologies and to pull forward investment and assist with investment in those technologies and in those projects, including educating the traditional finance sector on how those technologies should be financed and the return able to be achieved. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation was not set up to invest in emerging, experimental technologies. That is the role of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA. For that reason ARENA provides grants of funds to invest in the development of emerging technologies. It has hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars available to deliver such grants.

The CEFC is not a grant organisation like ARENA; the CEFC is effectively a bank where it makes investment and it is required under its legislation to get a reasonable financial return—indeed, the same type of return a private bank would get on its investments. It is not the role of the CEFC to invest in emerging technologies. That is the role of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, and that is why it does not give loans; it gives grants. The CEFC gives loans, and one of its key purposes is to educate and pull forward finance from the private finance sector. We know how traditionally conservative private lending institutions are, and we know they will often not lend if they have any uncertainty or any doubt about the projects they are investing in.

The CEFC was established so it can come forward, demonstrate there is a sound business case that warrants investment, provide some of that investment finance itself and pull forward investment from the private sector. That is why the CEFC has been very effective at achieving not just a positive financial return on its own investments, but also partnering with some of the largest financial institutions in Australia—the big four banks and others—that have co-invested with the CEFC to support mature, established renewable energy technologies and renewable energy projects.

The language in the messaging from the Liberal opposition here and the Liberal government federally has been, at the very least, delivered on the misguided basis—that is, that somehow the CEFC is there to support emerging technologies. No. The CEFC is there to drive investment in what are quite mature and well-advanced renewable energy technologies that, because of their relative newness, still find it difficult to secure traditional finance from the private lending markets.

What is so devastating about the proposed draft directive to the CEFC from the federal government in not supporting small and medium-scale solar and wind energy generation projects is that, firstly, it has sent the signal to the private sector that those projects should not be invested in and, secondly, it has a direct impact on the capacity of those types of projects to go forward in our own local economy.

There are projects in the ACT that have previously been supported by the CEFC, and there are many more that we know are to come, particularly in medium-scale rooftop solar generation. Even the Western Australia Treasurer understands the importance of the growth in medium-scale rooftop solar generation and the potential economic transformation that can occur from that, but the federal government is not interested. It is basically saying that it is not a reliable investment and it should not be happening.

At the same time they are sending all of these messages, they are also telling the CEFC that it must continue to get an economic return on its investments comparable to what the private sector gets. They are saying, “Don’t invest in technologies that will deliver that return, but we still expect you to get that return and pay the dividend back to the federal government.” It is an absurd position. It is a position that is undermining investment in our local economy and in the renewable energy sector, solar and wind more generally.

Ms Lawder continued to talk about how great it is that the 33,000 gigawatt hours of renewable energy generation under the revised renewable energy target is going to

give certainty in jobs and investment in wind energy generation in Australia and, notably, here in the surrounding Australian capital region. That claim may have some veracity, but only if you ignore all the comments that have come out of the federal leadership of the parliamentary Liberal Party over the past couple of months. The Prime Minister has said he would have cut the RET further if he was allowed to. The Treasurer has said he hates wind farms and does not think there should be any investment in them.

The RET has been cut—let us be very clear about that. The RET was not about 20 per cent renewable by 2020, even though that was the shorthand term lent to the target in the legislation. The target in the legislation was actually 43,000 gigawatt hours by 2020. The federal Liberal government cut that to 33,000. They can say, “Oh, we’ve still got 20 per cent,” but, no, they have cut it. The target in the legislation was not in percentage terms; it was in gigawatt hour terms, and it has been reduced. They have cut the target, and on top of that they have sent every possible message about why you should not invest in renewable energy, particularly wind.

On top of that again, you have the ridiculous situation where there is a report from a Senate committee recommending, regardless of what organisations like the National Health and Medical Research Council and others say is very clear—that there is no medical evidence that wind farms generate noise that causes damage to human health—a whole new regime because of this so-called harm which no credible scientist is prepared to put their name to.

That is the environment this federal Liberal Party has created in our nation. It is unprecedented in the world—unprecedented. Tony Abbott said on the day that he was elected Prime Minister that he wanted Australia to be open for business. He should have put a little disclaimer against that, because it was open for business unless you are involved in the renewable energy sector, in which case the message is clearly, “We’re open for business but we’re going to shut you down.” That is exactly what has been going on ever since their election.

The losers in this are ordinary Australians. They will not have the same opportunities to develop the skills, experience and technical expertise needed to compete in this massive change in the global economy and all the economic opportunity that will come from that. At the same time, with over two-thirds of coal-fired generation in Australia at the end of its economic life right now and needing to be replaced, we will not have the skills, expertise or investment pipeline needed to replace that with cleaner forms of energy generation. Ms Lawder’s amendment should not be supported. (*Time expired.*)

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (12.16): Unlike the federal Liberal government’s grudging, spiteful attitude, the ACT government is taking the need for action on climate change seriously. At the same time as we build our reliance on renewable energy, we are growing our renewable energy sector in Canberra. I am proud that the high-tech CIT Bruce campus in my electorate is well placed, thanks to the vision of our government, to be at the centre of training and innovation in the renewable industry.



One of the exciting new concepts for our diversified economy is bringing industry and research sectors together in Canberra in a renewable energy precinct. This would focus on solar, wind energy and energy storage. The government's renewable energy industry development strategy will harness existing programs and expertise in Canberra. It will also look to the development of the next generations of renewable energy technologies.

We are on the way to creating Canberra as a centre of excellence in the renewable energies industries with the spin-offs of investment and jobs in these clever industries. Our city has a well-educated population and the quality of our schools and post-secondary education, including the CIT, the ANU and the University of Canberra, give us a great springboard to being at the centre of emerging innovations in the renewables sector and future industries.

CIT Bruce is well placed to be at the centre of vocational education in the new industries in renewable energy as a centre of excellence, servicing the training needs of the operators of the ACT wind farm projects and others. CIT already has courses and facilities dedicated to training and sustainability technologies. The aim of the CIT Bruce sustainable skills training hub building was to have an energy efficient and ecologically sustainable building with most of the structure and technology visible for training and most of the building plant available for hands-on training. It was a design requirement to provide as many examples of sustainable technologies as possible to enable the building itself to function as a teaching aid.

Students are trained in the design, installation, testing, commissioning and maintenance of the technologies. Back when Australia was regarded internationally as a leader in action on climate change—not the pariah we are today—the then Labor federal government funded the CIT Bruce sustainable skills training hub in 2009. This was through its investment in vocational education and training, specifically the training infrastructure investment for tomorrow element of the teaching and learning capital fund. Additional funds came from the ACT government and from within CIT. Other backing for the hub came from the Housing Industry Association, the Engineers Australia Canberra Division, the University of Canberra and the ACT Planning and Land Authority.

In the CIT sustainable skills training hub, CIT and the community have a state-of-the-art training facility targeted towards a sustainable future for all Australians. CIT Bruce uses the hub to run practical courses in renewable energy technologies, heat pump technologies, solar hot water and other training related to sustainability in the construction industries.

CIT has now won funding through the wind auction process. One of the wind auction winners has committed \$7 million to support the development of CIT Bruce as Australia's first dedicated trade training facility for wind turbine maintenance. The winning first wind auction company will be training its entire staff at various institutions in Canberra, including at CIT Bruce, for its Australian wind farms. As wind farm operations spread in our regions and across the country, they will need more and more staff skilled in these renewable industries.

Whilst the ACT surges ahead with this vision of renewables as a key area of diversified economy, what can we say of the vision of our federal colleagues? In one of the first acts of the newly elected Liberal federal government, they abolished the Climate Commission in September 2013—Australia's hottest year on record. Think here of the mythical ostrich with its head buried in the sand. The independent Climate Council carries on the work of the former Federal Labor Government's Climate Commission which was set up to provide accurate and timely information as a credible Australian authority on climate change and our progress in addressing it. In 10 days the new, independent Climate Council raised over \$1 million from public subscriptions to maintain a voice of an independent authority on climate change.

In its first year the Climate Council was very busy issuing a range of reports including the 2014 report titled, *The Australian renewable energy race: which states are winning or losing?* This report makes it clear that the ACT is one of the national renewable energy leaders. It says South Australia and the ACT with progressive renewable energy policies and targets are winning the Australian renewable energy race.

The ACT has the most ambitious renewable energy target of any jurisdiction in Australia. We aim to source 90 per cent of its electricity supply from renewables by 2020. In terms of renewable energy consumption, the ACT is already ahead of most other states on a per capita basis, currently sourcing around 20 per cent of that electricity from renewable sources. Recently, in the lead-up to the UN Bonn climate change conference, the ACT was recognised through a joint report of the Carbon Disclosure Project, the Climate Group and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund as having the equal second highest emissions reduction target of any state or region in the world. The ACT was the only Australian state or region on the list.

In the lead-up to the Brisbane G20 summit last year the world's largest economies—the USA and China—signed agreements to lock in targets to address climate change. World leaders were eager to talk climate change at the G20, while our Prime Minister embarrassingly did his best to keep it off the agenda. President Obama had to go off to speak at the University of Queensland to make his call for action on climate change. He also made a special plea to save the world heritage listed Great Barrier Reef from damage from rising seas and global warming. Our Prime Minister's response was to whinge to world leaders that Australians did not support a tax on going to the doctor.

While the ACT government is thinking globally, we are very much acting locally. As the Climate Council report I mentioned earlier said, the ACT is punching above its weight in terms of effective emissions reductions targets. I commend Ms Porter's motion to the Assembly.

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

**Sitting suspended from 12.24 to 2.30 pm.**

## Questions without notice ACT Policing—motorcycle gangs

**MR HANSON:** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, on 1 April 2009 you said:

I do not accept the assertion as a given that, because New South Wales legislates in one way, we will be swamped ... by bikie gangs from New South Wales.

On 26 June this year, the *CityNews* quoted an ACT Policing statement regarding a meeting of the New South Wales chapter of the Rebels due to occur in the ACT the next day:

Police have information to suggest the ACT has become an attractive location for the holding of such meetings due to the absence of specific legislation in the ACT preventing the association of persons of the type typically found to be members of outlaw motorcycle gangs. Legislation such as consorting in NSW, has proved to be effective in reducing the occurrence of such events in those states.

Attorney-General, why have you failed to legislate to protect the people of the ACT and ignored police advice that the ACT has become an attractive location for gang activity?

**MR CORBELL:** I have not failed. Indeed, the advice from ACT Policing remained consistent for a period of time up until around 12 months ago, that there had been no significant displacement of outlaw motorcycle gang activity to the ACT.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson! You have asked your question.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson! Mr Hanson!

**MR CORBELL:** So between 2009 and 2014 the advice of the police was unchanged. That was that there was no significant or material displacement of outlaw motorcycle gang activity. That advice changed last year with the arrival—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson!

**MR CORBELL:** of a rival outlaw motorcycle gang, and last year I outlined that the government was, and it continues, preparing legislative options to further strengthen the police's capacity to deal with these matters. The government has also supported ACT Policing through operation nemesis, which is a dedicated task force, to target outlaw motorcycle gangs.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson!

**MR CORBELL:** So I reject absolutely any assertion that the government has failed to act in this regard, because the evidence is entirely to the contrary. At all times this government has relied upon and had close regard to the advice from the AFP, the Australian Crime Commission and others, and the advice from the AFP and the Australian Crime Commission has been unchanged in relation to displacement until about nine to 12 months ago.

At that point, I announced that the government has developed and is developing options in relation to these matters. I am on the public record as indicating that the development of consorting laws is under consideration. It is a complex matter; it is a difficult policy matter to work through. But we are doing that work to make sure that any such laws, should they be introduced, are just, are proportionate and are consistent with the harm we are seeking to address.

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

**MR HANSON:** Attorney-General, how many bkie-associated crimes will have to be committed in the ACT before you take action?

**MR CORBELL:** I reject the presumption in Mr Hanson's question, and I refer him to my previous answer.

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

**MR WALL:** Attorney, how many gang meetings have occurred in the ACT as a result of your failure to legislate in line with New South Wales?

**MR CORBELL:** Again, I reject the assumption and presumption in Mr Wall's supplementary question and I refer him to my previous answer.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Attorney, were you wrong in ignoring the AFPA advice from 2009 that a failure to legislate in line with New South Wales would lead to the ACT becoming an oasis for bkie gang activity?

**MR CORBELL:** Madam Speaker, they seem to be a bit deaf on that side of the chamber, because I did not ignore that advice. I stated that quite clearly in my previous answers. Let us be very clear about this: the advice from the AFP and the ACC remained unchanged until around 12 months ago. That was very clear. Are they saying, Madam Speaker, that the current Chief Police Officer and the previous Chief Police Officer gave incorrect advice—

**Mr Hanson:** A point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MR CORBELL:** to committees of this place when they themselves stated—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Corbell, please sit down; there is a point of order. Stop the clock.

**Mr Hanson:** My point of order is on relevance. Mr Wall's supplementary question did not refer to advice from the Chief Police Officer. He referred to advice from the AFPA—that is the Australian Federal Police Association advice—in 2009 that a failure to legislate in line with New South Wales would lead to the ACT becoming an oasis for bikie gang activity.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** On the point of order—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** On the point of order, which I am trying to rule on, Mr Hanson, Mr Wall mentioned the AFPA and not the AFP. Mr Corbell, you may have misheard that and you might like to address the question that Mr Wall asked.

**MR CORBELL:** Yes, I did mishear it, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the clarification. But the government takes its advice on these matters from the Australian Federal Police and not from the police union.

### **Arts—funding**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for the Arts. In July the government announced its art residencies for 2016. It was noted that the ACT Writers Centre, Belconnen Arts Centre, Canberra Glassworks, CraftACT, PhotoAccess and the National Portrait Gallery will be funded under this initiative. Minister, what will the respective residencies at these organisations be doing?

**MS BURCH:** I will take on notice the particular bit about residencies and those organisations. Suffice it to say that at the Glassworks it would be glass based but they have done works with CraftACT where they have had a mix of textile and glass as well. But I am more than happy to bring that back when I can.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what was the total number of prospective residencies that was considered and what were the criteria used in coming to the final decision by the government?

**MS BURCH:** It is a merit selection process. Again, there is an independent panel that would look at the various requests for residencies. The independent panel provides advice to artsACT. The quantum is limited. There is not an unlimited bucket. Again you probably have a series of questions and I will bundle all that I can and provide you with that information.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, why are there no music-related residencies in this year's program?

**MS BURCH:** It could be that there were none who applied for a residency.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, has the government ever sponsored a music residency under this initiative? If so, how many? If not, why not?

**MS BURCH:** I think members would appreciate that I would not have the historical records in front of me. I will take that on notice with the others.

### **Construction industry—work safety**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. Minister, has CFMEU intimidation of WorkSafe ACT inspectors led to building sites being closed down in the ACT?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I am unaware of any intimidation of worksite inspectors in the ACT. It has not been reported to me. Therefore whether sites have been shut down or not is a matter of conjecture. The Work Safety Commissioner, Mr McCabe, has not reported any intimidation to me. Therefore I would say that if there was intimidation at those worksites, it would be reported to him. It is very important, of course, that if any intimidation or bullying occurs at a worksite, it is reported directly to the commission. In that sense he would deal with it in the first instance and then, of course, would report it to me as well.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, what reports are provided to you as the responsible minister by WorkSafe ACT regarding inappropriate behaviour or attempts at intimidation on ACT sites?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The WorkSafe commissioner reports to me on a regular basis and advises me of his inquiries. Generally they are to do more with work safety across the ACT. He has not reported to me any intimidation, as Mr Wall requests.

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

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, why has the ACT government failed to protect WorkSafe ACT inspectors from intimidation on building sites?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I reject the premise in the question. As I have said in my previous answer, if there was intimidation I am sure that the WorkSafe commissioner would report that to me.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, what concerns have been raised with you from any source about CFMEU intimidation on ACT building sites?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It is similar to the question I answered yesterday: I have not had any formal response or formal position put to me in regard to intimidation at work sites in the building industry across the ACT.

**Mr Smyth:** So it has been informal, has it?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That is in regard to informal as well. I have had nobody come to me and say, “We would like you to investigate intimidation on a work site in the ACT.”

### **Public housing—waiting list**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Housing. My question is based on the social housing waiting list as at 3 August 2015 published on your directorate’s website. Minister, why do applicants for emergency housing such as domestic violence victims have to wait for an average of 238 days?

**MS BERRY:** As Ms Lawder will know and as people in this Assembly will know, public housing in the ACT is targeted to those who are most in need and approximately 97 per cent of allocations for both public and community housing was made to households who are greatest in need in the period 2013-14. This is the highest of all jurisdictions. This is well in excess of the national average of approximately 75 per cent.

**Ms Lawder:** On a point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Stop the clock please.

**Ms Lawder:** My question is related to the proportion of people at crisis getting public housing and it related to the average waiting time of 238 days.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You are making a point of order in relation to being directly relevant?

**Ms Lawder:** Yes.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think it is pretty early in the answer to see whether the minister is failing to be directly relevant but I will remind her of the provisions of the standing order and that the question was about the average 238-day wait on the waiting list, in answering the question. Minister Berry.

**MS BERRY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Housing ACT works very hard to make sure that those people who are most in need, including women and families who have experience of domestic and family violence and sexual assaults, are supported if they are experiencing homelessness.

Of the people who are waiting on the housing list for accommodation, those in priority housing are being supported by specialist homelessness services and they are being contacted regularly by FirstPoint who manage the Housing ACT waiting list to ensure that people who are waiting, who are in need of support, get it when they need it.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, why do applicants for high needs housing have to wait an average of 780 days—nearly two years—for housing?

**MS BERRY:** As I referred to in my answer to the member's first question, housing applicants in the ACT are people who are most in need of housing. That is 97 per cent. All of the people who apply for housing that are in the priority or high needs housing categories have a range of complex needs for which they need different kinds of support. This includes things like disability, mental health, drug and alcohol dependency, domestic violence and children at risk of abuse or neglect.

FirstPoint at Housing ACT is responsible for people seeking support through homelessness services. It does a fantastic job in making sure all of those people who have applied for housing are getting the support they need when they need it and for the right duration. That is the point I am making today: people who are not in desperate need of housing, and who are not placed in housing straightaway, are getting specialist services support. That is being provided through the work that FirstPoint does at Housing ACT.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, why do applicants for standard housing have to wait for 822 days, or over two years? Do you find that that is an acceptable time frame?

**MS BERRY:** As I have said previously, and I keep saying in this place, that housing in the ACT is provided to people who are most in need of housing; 97 per cent of people who are housed in Housing ACT residences are people who are in desperate need. While people are waiting for housing, Housing ACT works with each of those individuals to identify and respond to their specific needs and their specific circumstances. So it is not that people come onto these lists and apply for housing without getting the support that they need. For people who are experiencing homelessness while they are on the waiting list, as I have said, FirstPoint is available to assist in crisis accommodation or outreach support if that is what they need.

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

**MR DOSZPOT:** What analysis has the ACT government done of the impact of the destruction of hundreds of properties along Northbourne Avenue on waiting times for properties?

**MS BERRY:** Could the member repeat the question? I did not quite catch how it connected with the questions previously.



**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Doszpot, would you like to repeat the question?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I would be very happy to. Minister, what analysis has the ACT government done of the impact of the destruction of hundreds of properties along Northbourne Avenue on waiting times for properties?

**MS BERRY:** People who are living in Housing ACT dwellings along Northbourne Avenue are being rehoused as their needs are being identified and as housing becomes available. There has been no effect on the waiting list of the work that is being done by the ACT government during this renewal program.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Coe!

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Coe! I cannot hear Ms Berry.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe! Ms Berry, have you finished?

**MS BERRY:** I have responded to the question, thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Questions without notice. Dr Bourke.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, I call you to order.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I call you to order too, Mr Hanson. I called members of the opposition to order on a number of occasions. When I call people to order, it is a little egregiously disorderly then to say, “What about somebody else?” when I call somebody to order. I make the call as to who to call to order, not members of the place. I call Dr Bourke, preferably without interruption.

### **Council of Australian Governments—meeting**

**DR BOURKE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, could you inform the Assembly of the historic understanding amongst leaders at the Council of Australian Governments leaders retreat on ways we can increase national productivity and maintain health standards and services in the future?

**MR BARR:** I thank Dr Bourke for the question. The recent leaders retreat, attended by the Prime Minister, premiers, chief ministers and a representative from the

Australian Local Government Association, was a significant step forward in fixing Australia's federation. We discussed a range of challenges and looked, in the first instance, to identify the key problems and challenges facing our federation. These include maintaining health services and standards, building new infrastructure to reduce congestion and improve the quality of life in our respective communities, the delivery of fair and affordable access to housing, the provision of training that equips people for real jobs, and work to ensure that our education system prepares our nation's children for a globally competitive and interconnected world.

It was very heartening that for the first time, in recent memory anyway, all leaders, regardless of jurisdiction or political party, recognised that without reform our health system would begin to buckle under the pressure of an ageing population. New South Wales Premier Mike Baird deserves great credit for doing the work and putting on the table the costs—the significant increased costs—facing the Australian population when it comes to health service delivery over the next 15 years.

Thanks to Premier Baird's honesty, and then the support of other state and territory leaders and ultimately the Prime Minister, we were able to have an honest conversation about the problems that we are facing now and that we will face over the next generation. But for the first time there was an agreement by all leaders across the political divide in this country that whilst we can and should continue to make service delivery efficiencies, there will be a significant gap—even with those efficiencies, a significant gap—between the resources necessary to just maintain health services into the future and the revenue that we have available to us as state, territory and commonwealth governments.

By 2030, the total fiscal gap across this country could be as high as \$45 billion, the health funding gap being \$35 billion of that. So there was unanimous commitment amongst leaders that we need to confront these issues head on and that we must keep an open mind on ways to better fund the needs of our citizens. It is through this work, through the work of treasurers at the tax reform meeting that will be held in Canberra in three weeks time, that the leaders in this country, at a state, territory and commonwealth level, across the political divide, will seek to continue to work together, having identified the problems, to now provide viable solutions.

That will mean more efficiencies in service delivery and reform of our federation, but it also means increased revenue at both a commonwealth and a state and territory level if we are just to maintain our current level of health service provision. That is now agreed across the political divide—Labor and Liberal; small states; big states; and the commonwealth. That was a significant achievement out of the leaders retreat.

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

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, why have decisions around health funding arrangements become more necessary and urgent over the past year?

**MR BARR:** The 2014 federal budget instituted a range of changes that included the cessation of the national health reform agreement that the states and territories and the commonwealth had signed up to in 2011. The ACT signed that agreement on the basis

that it included a commonwealth guarantee that the ACT would be no worse off under the health SPP and that we would be eligible for our fair share of additional growth funding. The 2014 commonwealth budget abandoned this guarantee. It slashed growth funding, when we all know demand is growing every year. Since then the commonwealth has largely ignored the increasing pressure on Australia's health system.

I also note that that wilful ignorance of the pressures on our health system is shared by the Leader of the Opposition, who refuses to acknowledge the damage that his federal colleagues are causing not just to the ACT health system but to our nation's health system. With \$57 billion stripped from the nation's growth health funding nationally, the ACT share is up to \$600 million over the 10 years to 2026-27. That \$600 million that has been ripped out of our health system would fund approximately 58,000 elective surgery procedures. By 2026-27 the funding would have provided for a further 1,200 nurses, or 80 intensive care unit beds, or 340 general inpatient beds in the territory.

When you boil these numbers down to the actual effect this will have on Canberrans, you can understand why the Minister for Health and I are treating this issue with such urgency. It is not just here in the ACT and it is not just Labor jurisdictions. Premier Baird in New South Wales has made exactly the same point. (*Time expired.*)

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

**MS PORTER:** Chief Minister, what options regarding changing the national tax mix were proposed by the Prime Minister and premiers?

**MR BARR:** Premier Baird and the Prime Minister put forward a case for a 50 per cent increase in the goods and services tax as the most effective way to address health funding challenges. Other members of COAG put forward the option of exploring increases to the Medicare levy. The important point to note is that even if the GST was increased by 50 per cent and all of that money, less the appropriate compensation, was hypothecated to health, it still would not meet the funding gap.

All first ministers agreed to keep the possibility of a range of tax changes on the table. As a first step, there was agreement by leaders to broaden the goods and services tax to cover overseas online transactions under \$1,000. Specific details of further tax reform will be covered through the white paper process. But it is essential that any tax reforms are fair to Australians and that they provide a lasting and properly resourced way of addressing our future health needs to stop our health system buckling under the pressure of an ageing population. For example, any additional Medicare levy revenue should be directed into Australia's health system. That way the community would be assured that what is raised by the Medicare levy is invested into health care.

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

**MS PORTER:** Chief Minister, what actions are now being taken by leaders to progress consideration of possible reforms?

**MR BARR:** COAG will meet again this year and leaders will consider more developed options to progress the reform directions agreed at the leaders retreat. Between now and then recommendations will be prepared by individual premiers and chief ministers, informed by the federation reform expert panel, in the following areas: in school education the Queensland Premier and I will be working on recommendations; in health the Victorian and Tasmanian premiers will be working on recommendations; in the training area the Western Australian and Victorian premiers will be working on reform recommendations.

In areas of revenue raising the New South Wales and Queensland premiers will bring forward recommendations; in housing New South Wales and Queensland will also take the lead. Early childhood learning will be undertaken by South Australia, the Northern Territory and the president of the Local Government Association. And on Indigenous matters the Northern Territory and Western Australia will bring forward reform options.

This is an ambitious reform agenda for the federation but again I would like to put on the public record my appreciation for the work of the various premiers and chief ministers across the political spectrum. Frankly, coming back into this chamber and the sorts of juvenile interjections we have seen from those opposite demonstrate just how unfit they would be—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Coe!

**MR BARR:** to engage in this sort of federation reform debate that is necessary for this country. It is just juvenile interjections—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, Mr Hanson!

**MR BARR:** putting their head in the sand on the significant issues that this nation faces. Once again, it is no surprise that those opposite are described as—

**Dr Bourke:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The member's time has expired; so a point of order, Dr Bourke.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**Dr Bourke:** On a point of order, I would ask that Mr Hanson withdraw that comment please.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, what was the comment?

**Dr Bourke:** The comment, "In the pockets of the CFMEU."

**Mr Hanson:** The comment was that Mr Barr is in the pockets of the CFMEU, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think—

**Mr Hanson:** Well, they fund him.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, don't—I will take the point of order on notice and I will look at the context. I am loath to make rulings that expressions like “in the pocket” might be considered unparliamentary.

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, in this case, to save any confusion, I am happy to withdraw.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** If you want to withdraw, that is fine. That saves me doing the job.

### **ACT State Emergency Service—Chief Officer**

**MR SMYTH:** My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, why was the Chief Officer of the ACT SES appointed without the position being advertised?

**MS BURCH:** You did explore this through the estimates committee. The commissioner thought that he had merit that was worthy of the position. He was able to make that appointment, and he did so.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, why were other qualified applicants, such as the acting chief officer, not allowed to apply?

**MS BURCH:** The commissioner made the decision that the now appointed head of the SES with his 30 years of experience across emergency management was the most appropriate candidate for appointment. He made that decision and made that appointment.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, why were not volunteers consulted about the process used to fill the position?

**MS BURCH:** This is an appointment of a senior public service position. The commissioner made the call, made the appointment, and I support the appointment.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, how do you reconcile the need for greater gender equity within the ESA with the decision not to allow a female acting chief officer to apply for the Chief Officer position in the SES?

**MS BURCH:** I do remain committed to progressing the women in emergency services strategy. We are working towards a strategy that will see promotion of recruitment into Emergency Services across Fire & Rescue, SES, rural fire and ambulance. At the moment we sit on six per cent or thereabouts female participation within the workforce, and that is something we need to address, as well as diversity more generally. The appointment of the now head of SES is a good appointment. It is an appointment of a fellow with 30 years experience in emergency management. It was within the delegation and consideration of the commissioner. He made that call, and I support that call.

### **Taxis—review**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Chief Minister and concerns the current taxi industry innovation review. Chief Minister, when you first announced the review on 27 January 2015, you tweeted, and I will leave out the hashtags, that “The @actgovernment has commissioned an Innovation Review of the ACT taxi industry. BetterTransport RegulatoryReform NewOperators uber.” Chief Minister, why did you flag Uber as a new operator before the review or consultation had begun.

**MR BARR:** I am not sure if Mr Doszpot has missed the emerging trend in the world, but Uber, amongst other operators, but most particularly in this country Uber, are looking to enter into the market.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Chief Minister, will the ACT government regulate taxis and ride sharing operators under one regulation or under two different sets of regulations?

**MR BARR:** Those are just the sorts of issues that are being considered in the review.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, what compensation options have been canvassed for existing taxi licence holders if the ACT government does allow new operators into the territory?

**MR BARR:** Again, those issues are currently subject to the review.

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

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, when will the review be handed down and when will you act on those recommendations?

**MR BARR:** As soon as possible. I am very keen to ensure that Canberrans have the opportunity to access the full range of services that are available in other Australian cities.

### **Roads—Horse Park Drive**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Minister for Roads and Parking. The TAMS website, last updated in July 2013, advises that Roads ACT commissioned Indesco to produce preliminary sketch plans for the duplication of Horse Park Drive between Mulligans Flat Road and Gundaroo Drive. The 2015-16 ACT budget provides \$17.1 million for Horse Park Drive duplication. However, no mention is made of the duplication between Mulligans Flat Road and Gundaroo Drive. Minister, can you please clarify what work will be completed with this budgeted money?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Coe for his question. The intention is to ease traffic congestion in Gungahlin, so in that budget project we allocated over \$10 million over three financial years commencing in 2014-15 for the introduction of approaches to Barton Highway and the roundabouts and signalised movements from that intersection at Gundaroo as well. In regard to Horse Park Drive, I will have to take some of that on notice as I do not have it in my notes.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Minister, what has happened to the preliminary sketch plans? Have they been completed, how much did they cost and what work will be undertaken as a result of the \$17.1 million you announced in June?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I will take that on notice as well and come back with a full answer.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what forward design has been done for the duplication which you recently announced?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I do not have the forward design details with me here either, so I will take that on notice and come back with the answer.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, which parts of the road will be duplicated?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Again, I do not have those designs with me here, but I will come back to the Assembly and provide the answer.

### **Public housing—investment**

**MS PORTER:** My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, could you update the Assembly on recent milestones in the housing portfolio and how they support equality and inclusion in the Canberra community?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Porter for the question. The ACT government is committed to providing high quality social housing. We understand the vital role it plays in both economic and social inclusion for those in need in our community and the benefits it creates for all Canberrans.

On 3 July the Chief Minister and I opened Common Ground Canberra, a long-term Labor commitment and an item in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement. The ACT government invested \$13 million into the project, which provides 20 units for people experiencing homelessness and a further 20 units for affordable rental accommodation. Common Ground is different because it locates safe and secure accommodation directly with vital support services to help tenants break the cycle of homelessness. The goodwill shown to Common Ground has been inspiring and I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge groups like the Canberra Quilters, the Uniting Church Gungahlin, the Majura Men's Shed, the Orana Steiner School, the CWA, the broader Gungahlin community and the many other generous community and business donors.

At the same time we are undertaking a once-in-a-generation renewal of Canberra's public housing, which involves replacing 1,288 older public housing dwellings across Canberra. Last month, as part of this program, I announced the commencement of 20 new two-bedroom cottages in Chisholm. These homes are the first of an initial \$159 million construction program to rejuvenate Canberra's public housing stock. Our public housing renewal program is the largest since self-government and will deliver better and more secure homes as well as a significant economic investment to support our local economy and jobs. That is why I was pleased to announce that the contract to construct the homes was won by Canberra builder Blackett Homes.

Homelessness is a problem across Australia and here in Canberra we have 29 people sleeping rough on our streets most nights, and 1,785 people were homeless on census night, with most of these people in supported accommodation. In the ACT we provide the highest rate of homelessness accommodation and the highest level of public and social housing nationally. On 6 July this year, the Chief Minister signed an extended national partnership against homelessness agreement with the commonwealth government to enable the continued funding of homelessness service delivery until 30 June 2017. We will provide approximately \$19.6 million in 2015-16 and \$19.8 million in 2016-17 for specialist homelessness services.

The ACT government will continue to work to ensure continued funding to the homelessness sector beyond 30 June 2017. We understand that access to safe, appropriate and affordable housing will improve economic and social inclusion for tenants and improve wellbeing for everybody in our community.

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

**MS PORTER:** Minister, how does the Common Ground model that you mentioned differ from previous approaches to social and affordable housing?



**MS BERRY:** The Common Ground model differs because it is not a crisis service or homeless shelter. It is a permanent housing solution. It offers a “housing first”, not a “treatment first”, approach, which means support offered is tailored to tenants’ needs and housing is not contingent on the tenant first agreeing to engage with treatment or support.

Common Ground Canberra is based on a number of important principles, including: permanence—there is no time limit on rental tenure; tenant mix—tenants are comprised of a fifty-fifty split between formerly homeless and low income/affordable housing tenants; safety—a 24-hour concierge service is provided to ensure security of access; supportive—tenancy management and on-site support services are provided free of charge; affordability—rents are set at no more than 25 per cent of tenant income for formerly homeless tenants and at no more than 74.9 per cent of market rent for affordable housing tenants; being engaged with the local community—group activities and programs are provided to support tenant participation with the program and wider community; and quality—accommodation is of the highest quality and sustainably designed.

Common Ground works on the principle that if the chronic homeless can live in non-time-limited housing with support then they are more likely to build the skills and capacities to take up opportunities for education and employment which will help end chronic homelessness. Ultimately, this means people are supported to more fully participate in the social and economic life of the community.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, how does Common Ground complement the government’s overall commitment to social housing and homelessness services?

**MS BERRY:** Chronically homeless people remain one of the most difficult target groups to engage with due to a variety of structural, systemic and individual barriers. The ACT government is committed to addressing homelessness, and our longstanding commitment to establishing Common Ground Canberra provides a stronger link between homelessness services and social housing accommodation.

The model complements the government’s overall commitment to the role of social housing in fostering community inclusion. Common Ground maximises opportunities for social inclusion and the benefits of mixed communities through the provision of public housing in most parts of our city. Common Ground builds on our high level of social housing and targeting housing assistance to those most in need.

Some 95 per cent of our public housing tenants are from low income households. Almost 40 per cent of public housing dwellings are home to people living with disability. Almost two-thirds of our main tenants are women, and just over two-thirds of single older tenants are women.

The ACT has the highest level of social housing of all jurisdictions—almost 30 dwellings per 1,000 people compared to the national average of 17 dwellings per

1,000 people. As a proportion of housing in Canberra, public housing forms eight per cent of all housing stock, which is the highest level nationally. Through our priority process, 98 per cent of allocations are made to those most in need in the community, which is higher than in any other jurisdiction.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, what does the evidence show about Canberrans interacting with ACT housing and homelessness services?

**MS BERRY:** I am pleased to report that the results of the 2015 ACT tenant satisfaction survey showed a substantial improvement in tenant satisfaction. Overall satisfaction for public housing was 82.3 per cent, up from 76 per cent in 2014. A high proportion of tenants said public housing had improved their sense of belonging and allowed them to better engage in education and training.

For community housing, overall satisfaction was 88 per cent, which was up from 69 per cent. These strong results are the highest reported in the last decade for community housing and demonstrate that our commitment to public housing is making a real difference to people's lives.

For public housing tenants, the strongest driver of overall satisfaction was the service provided by Housing ACT staff, and I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the committed and hardworking staff at Housing ACT.

In the *Evaluation of reforms to the ACT Specialist Homelessness Service system* report which I released this week, we found that the homelessness sector is increasingly integrated, with improving levels of cooperation reported between services. These results are consistent with the message I am consistently hearing from public housing tenants and those who are accessing homelessness services—that they feel supported and included.

The government and most people in our community recognise that Canberra is enriched by its social diversity, and we are determined to ensure that this continues, to make sure that we continue to be the most livable city for all Canberrans.

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

### **Supplementary answer to question without notice Arts—funding**

**MS BURCH:** In response to the question on arts residencies, there were 15 applications for the 2016 funding round, and all this information is actually on artsACT website. In 2015 Young Music Society was given an arts residency program, and that goes to the question whether music had ever been provided a residency.

## Renewable energy

Debate resumed.

**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) (3.19): I am very pleased that Ms Porter brought this motion on today. I support the motion and will not be supporting Ms Lawder's amendment.

As Ms Porter's motion points out, the ACT government has established a nation-leading target of 90 per cent of renewable energy. This stands in stark contrast to the federal government and their continued attacks on renewable energy. The federal government's draft directive also stands in the way of innovative Australian businesses and others keen to invest in renewable energy.

Canberra is the national and international hub for renewable energy, and I am proud to be part of a government that has prioritised renewable energy. Indeed, I believe that it is the only responsible thing a government can do, given the challenges that climate change continues to present to us. The science of climate change is a fact that is no longer a debating point. Actions must be taken at every level of government to confront the challenge.

The community agrees with this government's approach to renewable energy with 80 per cent supporting ACT government action on climate change and with 93 per cent supporting our plans to promote new energy technology. As Ms Porter's motion points out, the ACT is on track to achieving this target and is expected to secure 65 per cent of its electricity needs from renewable energy sources by 2017.

Our public schools are playing their part to ensure that they can operate in a carbon-constrained world and support the government's renewable energy targets. I am pleased to detail for the Assembly the work being undertaken by the Education and Training Directorate in both supporting renewable energy and improving energy efficiency in our public schools.

In the area of renewable energy our public schools lead the way. We are the first jurisdiction where all schools have roof-mounted solar panels. There has been significant investment in roof-mounted solar panels with a minimum of 10 kilowatts being installed across our public schools. These were installed using funds under the ACT solar schools program and the national solar schools program. A total of \$2 million was allocated in the 2009-10 budget for the program, and the Education and Training Directorate assisted schools to secure \$2.3 million in grant funds under the Australian government's national solar schools program.

The ACT government continues to expand the investment in rooftop solar panels at ACT public schools, with the installation of 70-kilowatt systems completed at Neville Bonner primary and Franklin Early Childhood Centre in May of this year, and a 176-kilowatt system completed at the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning in July this year. Based on 2014 electricity consumption the Franklin Early

Childhood School expects its solar panels will provide 58 per cent of its energy needs, while at Neville Bonner its solar panels are predicted to provide 73 per cent of its energy requirements, and the system at Hedley Beare is predicted to provide a quarter of the centre's energy needs.

The new Coombs Primary School will also have a 100-kilowatt solar panel system installed as part of the construction, and a 30-kilowatt roof-mounted solar system was installed at the recently completed CCCares facility at Canberra College. Over the coming years rooftop solar systems will be expanded at a further five public schools: Canberra College, Canberra High School, Dickson College, Erindale College and UC Lake Ginninderra College.

On system expansions, the Black Mountain School and the junior campus of Caroline Chisholm School and the Lyneham High School will be completed by the end of this calendar year. Once completed they will bring all high school systems to 20 kilowatts and all P-10 schools and college systems to 30 kilowatts, and there will be a total of 1.88 megawatts of roof-mounted solar panel systems across our ACT public schools and ETD sites.

Schools are reinvesting their feed-in tariff income into further environmentally sustainable initiatives such as insulating window film, window covering, solar-powered roof ventilation fans, airlocks and external door replacements and shade sails. These further contribute to improving the thermal comfort of our schools and reducing their energy use. The commitment to renewable energy in our schools is only one part of the overarching approach to reduce the carbon footprint of our schools.

ACT public schools are now equipped with the technology to monitor their energy and water use through the installation of smart meters. These meters track electricity, gas and water usage and solar energy generation, and the results are published on a public website allowing both the schools and the local community to track performance.

ACT is the first jurisdiction to achieve this level of environmental measurement in our public schools. The meters not only allow ACT public schools to save money by monitoring their resource consumption but are also used as a teaching tool. Schools such as Melrose High School, amongst others, use this information to inform their science curriculum.

To support schools to reduce their energy consumption the ACT government committed \$3.5 million over four years in the 2012-13 budget for stage I of the carbon neutral schools program. The benefits of this program are twofold as it reduces the energy use of our schools and shows students sustainability practices that are important for our future. The 10 schools included in this initiative are Canberra, Mount Stromlo, Alfred Deakin High School, Caroline Chisholm senior campus, Arawang, Evatt, Fadden, North Ainslie, Theodore and Weetangera primary schools. Canberra High School and Theodore are positioned to be, indeed, the first carbon neutral schools in the ACT.

Under this program, work has been completed at 10 public schools with the installation of energy efficient fluorescent lights at Mount Stromlo and Alfred Deakin high, the senior campus of Caroline Chisholm, as well as at Arawang, Evatt, Fadden, North Ainslie and Weetangera. These energy efficient fluorescent lights are expected to reduce energy use for lighting by 25 per cent.

In addition to lighting upgrades, the directorate has also undertaken insulation upgrades at schools, which will reduce heat during periods of warmer weather and reduce heat loss during periods of colder weather. This will provide more comfort and will provide a more energy efficient environment.

Trial projects to improve the thermal efficiency of the building fabric have been undertaken at Canberra High School and North Ainslie Primary School. This involved retrofitting ceiling and cavity wall insulation. In the 2015-16 year ceiling insulation upgrades will be undertaken at Caroline Chisholm School and improvements will be made to the thermal efficiency of the building envelopes through things such as draft proofing, glazing upgrades, and better insulation will be undertaken, as mentioned, at schools such as Mount Stromlo and Alfred Deakin.

The green star performance tool kit pilot, developed by the Green Building Council of Australia, is being trialled at Canberra High School, and this focuses on identifying and implementing best practice in the daily operation and maintenance of facilities to reduce the environmental impact of the building assets. To date the directorate has secured over \$2 million in loans for a number of energy conservation programs through the ACT government's carbon neutral government fund that has absolute focus on energy conservations measures.

In summary, the ACT government is taking considerable steps to improve the energy efficiency of our public schools and support investment in renewable energy. Renewable energy is, indeed, sourced from non-coal power stations and I for one, joining others that have made comments on this here today, prefer the image of a wind farm rather than a smoke-billowing, coal-powered station any day. And I congratulate the Minister for the Environment on his ambitious goals for renewable energy.

I thank Ms Porter for bringing forward this important motion today. This goes to the heart of this government securing a bright, healthy and sustainable future for the next generation of Canberrans.

**MS PORTER** (Ginninderra) (3.28): I thank members for their support of my motion. Members clearly understand the critical role of renewable energy and understand the critical challenge we face with climate change. Members who understand that understand that this Labor government is showing leadership and will continue to show leadership, unlike the federal government which not only fails in its leadership stakes but is actually taking us backwards and is certainly an embarrassment across the world.

Madam Assistant Speaker, you said that I was blaming the federal government for what is happening across the world. I am rather pointing out the obvious, that each country needs to play its part. What is that saying about the weak link in the chain? I am pleased that you, Madam Assistant Speaker, have not joined the bandwagon in decrying wind farms and espousing the value of coal. There is no doubt about the elegance of wind turbines and they are certainly much more pleasant to look at than a pile of black coal or a landscape scarred by a mine. However, I cannot support your amendment.

Mr Rattenbury is correct. Our Prime Minister's attitude towards coal and renewable energy is bizarre. I think Mr Gentleman makes an important point when he talks about the community support of renewable energy and the strategies to assist us all to find a way to face the reality of climate change. Before I came into this place I saw local community initiatives springing up in the suburbs near where I lived, initiatives that they could use to slow down climate change and show them that as a community they were able to tackle this problem and truly they get it.

What this government is continuing to do is to forward think—forward thinking with regard to renewable energy measures and forward thinking in relation to its targets. And yes, we are on track to achieve this.

I thank Minister Corbell for his support of my motion and I also thank him for his strong commitment to continue important investments in renewables. As Mr Corbell explained, the amendment does not throw any light on this subject but, rather, further muddies the waters and is just another example of the Liberals' confused and, frankly, dangerous stunts. I urge members to support the motion.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

## **Sub judice ruling and continuing resolution 10 Statement by Speaker**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call on the Deputy Clerk to introduce the next matter, I flagged yesterday in administration and procedure that in relation to this motion I would be making some comments in relation to the sub judice rule in order to frame this debate. I would refer members to continuing resolution No 10 on sub judice, which is at page 103 of the standing orders. I will read the important bits:

Subject to the discretion of the Chair, and to the right of the Assembly to legislate on any matter or to discuss any matter, the Assembly in all its proceedings ... shall apply the following rules on matters *sub judice*:

The important piece on this occasion is:

- (1) Cases in which proceedings are active in the courts shall not be referred to in any motion, debate or question.

- (a) (i) Criminal proceedings are active when a charge has been made or a summons to appear has been issued.
- (ii) Criminal proceedings cease to be active when they are concluded by verdict and sentence or discontinuance, or in cases dealt with by courts martial, after the conclusion of the mandatory post-trial review.

I remind members that any discussion, as opposed to the merest passing mention, about charges in relation to the CFMEU and the royal commission that was on foot in the ACT recently would be contrary to the Assembly's continuing resolution.

Likewise, this Assembly has in the past admonished members for speculating on the guilt or innocence of people charged in the ACT. I remind members of the legal convention of being innocent until proven guilty and I will not tolerate any discussion on this motion that wanders into the current court proceedings.

That said, I believe that there is plenty of precedence and guidance in relation to judicial processes like a royal commission and I refer members in particular to paragraph 10.103 and also paragraph 10.102 in part and the footnote that goes with it. I will read those. Paragraph 10.103 of the *Companion* says:

The Senate has also taken the view that royal commissions and boards of inquiry which are not courts and to which the convention does not strictly apply are unlikely to be influenced in their findings by parliamentary debate. However, similar issues can arise. Clearly, the potential for the appearance of political interference exists even if debate in the legislature had no influence on the process and the findings of an inquiry.

Paragraph 10.102 claims that it would be foolish for members to deny themselves “the opportunity to debate important matters of public concern by the rigid application of a convention rendered redundant by the discussion” in other places. And I will also read the footnote that goes with this:

Advice to the Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs ...—

in July 2001—

The Clerk of the Senate noted that the matter which the committee was examining and which was ... subject of a coronial inquest ... ‘has been the subject of extensive public discussion which ... weakens the case for restraint on the part of the Senate or its committees’.

In exercising my discretion on the matter in accordance with the continuing resolution I will have those matters in mind and I remind members once again of their responsibility to maintain the innocence of those accused until proven otherwise. I remind members also of the dignity of the Legislative Assembly.

## Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (3.36): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the ongoing Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption is currently investigating the activities of the ACT Branch of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU);
- (b) a number of former CFMEU and former ALP members are facing charges;
- (c) the very close political relationship between the ACT Labor Party and the CFMEU;
- (d) the significant contribution made by the ACT Branch of the CFMEU to ACT Labor and the ACT Greens election campaigns, both financially and by way of supportive third party campaigns;
- (e) elected members of the ACT Labor Party and the ACT Greens currently form the Government in the ACT; and
- (f) silence on the part of both ACT Labor and the ACT Greens; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government's Labor and Green members to suspend all financial and political links with the CFMEU pending the outcome of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance.

The motion I have brought to this place today is dedicated to the many Canberra businesses and individuals who have played a part in attempting to bring to light the unscrupulous union practices occurring on building sites in our suburbs and town centres. The local businesses that have been brave enough to come forward and give evidence at the royal commission have taken big risks in doing so. They have risked their livelihoods and their reputations in the process.

These risks are perceived because a culture of fear has taken hold in the ACT construction sector—a culture of fear perpetuated by standover men, a culture being perpetuated by price-fixing and by threats being made to businesses that they will not work in the ACT unless they play the CFMEU game. It appears that thuggery and bullying are behaviour that is well entrenched on ACT building sites.

However, it is hopeful that some of this scourge may now have been purged as a result of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption coming to our town. The royal commission's focus on the ACT has given local businesses the confidence to speak out about the allegedly corrupt and criminal behaviour perpetrated by the CFMEU over many years. The CFMEU tried to put a stop to these



hearings; they were dragged kicking and screaming to the commission, making all sorts of claims along the way. But they cannot hide from the evidence presented and the criminal allegations levelled against them in the royal commission.

The statements made by witnesses at the royal commission are damning. Previously, only people retiring from the construction industry locally or whose businesses were about to fold were game to speak out. For the first time ever, contractors, business operators and even an ACT public servant took the brave step to stand up publicly in the royal commission and detail their experiences of working in the ACT's construction industry. Over three weeks, witness after witness came forward with statements that asserted and alleged widespread intimidation, bribery, corruption, thuggery and cartel behaviour being perpetrated by the ACT branch of the CFMEU on ACT construction sites across the territory on a daily basis and over a long period of time.

These allegations include threats by CFMEU organisers to exclude companies from the commercial construction market if they do not meet union demands. On the first day of the hearings in Canberra, one witness stated as evidence:

I understood from what he told me if I paid ... \$50,000 I was guaranteed the job ...

On subsequent days another business owner stated:

He said without paying it's possible that I cannot stay in Canberra for work ...

CFMEU organisers allegedly carried out those threats and demands by way of intimidation. They do not balk at the use of standover tactics or deliberately and wilfully disrupting work on sites. There are allegations of corruption levelled against one particular CFMEU organiser that he allegedly extorted a substantial sum of money from Canberra-based building firms on various work sites. Another organiser has today been charged with bribery.

There are allegations of CFMEU organisers promoting cartel and price-fixing arrangements. Allegations have also been made of the CFMEU forcing employers to pay for union memberships for employees even where employees do not wish to join, and lodging enterprise agreements with the Fair Work Commission that employees have not voted on. This is not new behaviour, and it has been allowed to go unchecked for far too long.

Judith Sloan stated in the *Australian* on 14 July:

The big employers understand the game and create space in their tenders for this extortion. It is generally the small players, the subcontractors, that get burnt if they don't play by the rules. These rules involve operating under CFMEU-approved enterprise bargaining agreements that match the pay and conditions set by the head contractor and agreeing to closed shops—every worker is a union member, whether or not that worker actually pays the dues.

The CFMEU is perfectly capable of driving smaller operators out of business. It will use bogus occupational health and safety reasons to enter worksites and, in some cases, interrupt time-sensitive work, such as concrete pours.

When health and safety are used as the basis for any industrial conflict, it is invariably the health and safety of workers that are the first victim. To back up all of this, the master builders association conducted their own survey on 101 of their members locally. It found that 71.8 per cent of respondents had been verbally intimidated by the ACT branch of the CFMEU and 41 per cent physically intimidated, and that 58.4 per cent of respondents had received threats to exclude them from the market if they did not agree to pattern enterprise bargaining agreements which required payments to the CFMEU and associated entities. A further 32 per cent had been asked to make donations to the CFMEU or related business entities in exchange for “industrial peace”. And seven per cent were asked outright for bribes.

Most importantly, and most distressing to come out of all of this evidence and publicity, is the impact on the ACT community. At the end of the day, the most dramatic impact is on the ACT economy. Fixed-price arrangements for everything from concrete to scaffolding, as alleged in the royal commission, prove that competition is a myth in the ACT under the CFMEU’s rules. Good businesses simply cannot thrive in this style of cartel, and the ACT community as a whole will never get a fair price in this environment. Fixed pricing unnecessarily drives prices up on every commodity. Effectively, when the competition edge is taken out of the marketplace and backroom deals decide the pricing structure and ultimately the cost of building work, the true cost is unknown. This impacts every aspect of our property sector, from government contracts to first homebuyers.

Yesterday the minister for industrial relations stated very carefully in an answer to a question without notice that he could not recall any cases of bullying or intimidation by CFMEU officials affecting government projects being brought to his attention. Tellingly, the minister would not commit to taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and intimidation. It is alarming to think that members of the ACT government’s own work safety body have outlined the intimidation they have been subjected to simply because they were doing their job.

As the royal commission moves to Sydney, just yesterday it heard that the CFMEU garnered more than \$1 million into its so-called “general revenue” through clauses in EBAs that were purportedly for training, charity and income protection. It was also alleged yesterday that an insurance scheme paid the CFMEU promoters fees in excess of \$200,000. The royal commission will continue to seek evidence that a training body controlled by the union paid almost \$800,000 last year in income to the CFMEU.

Counsel assisting the royal commission alleged that the agreements struck with ACT and NSW building firms hid the fact that money paid by employers “facilitates financial money for the union itself”. The CFMEU have defended filling up the coffers with this money and defended their donations to the ALP and Greens on this matter.

Nationally, the links between the CFMEU and the ALP particularly are strong—very strong. In the ACT these links are no different. In fact it is a requirement for all members of the ACT ALP to be a financial member of a union covering their trade or profession. This is fact. It is also fact that the CFMEU have made significant contributions, both financially and by way of third-party campaigns, to the election campaigns waged by ACT Labor and the ACT Greens over many years. This support equates in dollar terms to almost \$215,000 to the ALP in cold hard cash. This excludes in-kind room hire and the like. And that figure is since the Labor Party came to power in the ACT. In addition to this, the ACT Greens have received \$92,500 from the CFMEU since 2006.

I will put on the record just the most recent financial disclosures available. The most recent financial disclosures available from Elections ACT for the 2013-14 financial year show that the ALP was a beneficiary of about \$33,380 whilst the Greens raked in \$50,000. Going back to 2011-12, it was \$56,354 to the Labor Party and another \$12,500 to the Greens. In 2010-11, it was \$10,000 to the Greens and \$24,373.95 to the Labor Party from the CFMEU—not to mention an additional \$4,500 from the Tradies club, a known subsidiary of the CFMEU.

Are those opposite beneficiaries of these alleged corrupt practices? This is a plausible question that should be asked. Could it be that financial gain from the alleged extortion and price-fixing go directly to the coffers of the Labor-Greens political machine? Added to the huge profits from union-controlled poker machines, in my view this equates to votes.

The Labor Party has been in power in the ACT for a long time. This exclusive power has been fuelled directly by the CFMEU and other unions. In view of the evidence brought to light, ACT Labor and Mr Rattenbury must suspend all financial and political links with the CFMEU pending the outcome of the royal commission into trade union governance. It must be noted today that there has been a distinct silence from Labor MLAs and Mr Rattenbury on the revelations emanating from the royal commission.

To those that have taken the step to provide statements to the royal commission, the silence from the government is just as concerning as the allegations themselves, if not more concerning. Silence from the government in the face of such damning testimony could well be interpreted by local business as saying that all of this will be ignored, if not completely dismissed, and that the behaviours will continue unchecked. We all hope that this is not the case. The silence could well mean that people who have had the courage to stand up to the bullies have done so in vain. They have taken a stand and bared all, and are left increasingly vulnerable the longer the Labor-Greens government stays silent on this issue.

I move this motion today in the name of fairness to the local businesses who have endured for too long the diabolical practices of the CFMEU and in the name of fairness for all ACT residents. While there are questions over the integrity of the CFMEU, the integrity of the Labor-Greens government is also in question as long as they continue to accept political and financial support from the union. The only way forward is for all members to support this motion—

**Ms Burch:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, have you got a point of order?

**Ms Burch:** I would like to seek your guidance. It is guidance I am seeking—if it is appropriate or parliamentary to draw the connection of the integrity of members of this government as Mr Wall has just done.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I have been listening very carefully and I have made it very clear that I was taking a very active interest in this because of the propriety of this house. I have seen you contemplating popping up a couple of times, so I have been very attentive to what is being said. I have not heard anything that I consider is unparliamentary, but I will remind Mr Wall—you have not really taken a point of order; you are seeking my guidance—to be mindful of the proprieties of the house and to not cast aspersions upon members of this place.

**Ms Burch:** Thank you, and just on that, he was linking silence by members of the government to question our integrity, and that connection should not be made.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think it was done hypothetically; it was done by way of a question. I do not think that Mr Wall has offended any of the rules of propriety in this place. Mr Wall, on the question that the motion be agreed to.

**MR WALL:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying before, as long as there are questions remaining over the integrity of the CFMEU and the government opposite continue to be the beneficiaries of their financial and political support, questions need to be raised as to the integrity of this government. The only way forward—

**Ms Burch:** On a point of order—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can we stop the clock? I take the point. I will take that as a point of order and I will ask you, Mr Wall, to be very mindful that you cannot draw inferences about the integrity of members of this place. I ask you to be very careful with your words.

**MR WALL:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The only way forward is for all members in this place to support this motion—for those members opposite to cease accepting the financial and political support until the inquiries of the royal commission and other courts have been completed and for those opposite to take a stand and adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, intimidation and corruption on ACT construction sites. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (3.51): Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this motion this afternoon. I will be opposing the motion. The motion does, however, provide me with an opportunity to remind

ourselves of some of the important achievements that the Australian trade union movement have campaigned for and won on behalf of Australian workers over the years.

These include things that we now take for granted, such as the right for full-time workers to have four weeks annual leave; establishing the principle of equal pay for equal work, protection for workers against being required to undertake unreasonable hours of work with the introduction of an eight-hour working day; paid sick leave, long service leave and penalty rates; and establishing a woman's right to be paid maternity leave.

Let us also remind ourselves that unions make a very significant contribution to the maintenance and improvement of health and safety in the workplace and that unions play a vital role in ensuring that workers are consulted on health and safety matters and their concerns are not simply ignored by employers.

It is my view that the active participation of trade unions in the health and safety field has helped to improve safety standards and reduce the number of serious accidents in the workplace. In the case of the construction industry, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union have also played a pivotal role in getting employees home safely by reducing workplace deaths on building sites, and I welcome the ongoing involvement of the CFMEU in this regard.

It is in this context that I find the current proceedings at the royal commission to be most disappointing. As others have commented, this Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption appears to amount to nothing more than an expensive show trial of union officials, a substantial misuse of public funds and a desperate and shameless misuse of a royal commission for the political means of the Liberal Party. Every Liberal Prime Minister since Billy McMahon has had at least one royal commission into trade unions, but our current Prime Minister appears to have taken this to a new low level.

It is important to reflect that most commentators seem to think that by the time this royal commission has come to a conclusion it will have cost the Australian taxpayer in the region of \$80 million. In his first motion this morning, Mr Hanson quite rightly reminded this Assembly about the issue of domestic violence and the need to produce better outcomes for victims of family violence. However, the irony of our first motion this morning—

**Dr Bourke:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can we stop the clock? A point of order, Dr Bourke.

**Dr Bourke:** Madam Speaker, members of the opposition are continuously interrupting Mr Gentleman, which is unparliamentary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** They do not actually seem to be succeeding in interrupting Mr Gentleman, and as you know—

**Dr Bourke:** That is only due to his skill.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** That is right. And when I am making a ruling, it is quite unparliamentary to interrupt me or attempt to interrupt me. I have made a number of rulings in this place about interjections across the chamber. I have said this is a debating chamber and that I will call people to order when I think it is appropriate and necessary. But I do not expect that on all occasions members will listen to all debate in silence. It would be a very dull place if we did. I will remind members to be respectful so as not to interrupt members speaking.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I remind members that this morning Mr Hanson quite rightly reminded this Assembly about the issue of domestic violence—a very important issue—and the need to produce better outcomes for the victims of family violence. However, the irony of the first motion this morning on domestic violence is not lost on me. In April COAG agreed to spend \$30 million in joint funding for a national advertising campaign to reduce violence against women—violence that on average results in one woman killed each week in Australia by a partner or former partner. The contrast could not be starker. The Liberal Party is prepared to commit \$80 million of taxpayers' money to attack its political opponents at a royal commission as against \$30 million for domestic violence prevention. These figures speak for themselves and tell us something about the misplaced priorities of the Liberal Party.

I have always understood the importance of the principle that people should have the presumption of innocence until proved guilty in a court of law. As I confirmed in my answers at yesterday's question time, there can be no place in the workplace for bullying or corrupt practice. It is my view that any evidence of these practices should be referred to and appropriately dealt with and investigated by the police. Ultimately it is for a court of law to determine someone's guilt or innocence.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that this royal commission does not afford natural justice and fails to provide union witnesses with natural justice by making serious allegations without giving them proper notice and not allowing witnesses to properly respond to the allegations made. These are not the hallmarks of natural justice; rather, they are more reminiscent of a show trial. Natural justice is not being served by this royal commission.

Mr Wall's motion at (1)(d) mentions the financial contribution made by the CFMEU to the ACT Labor Party. I remind the Assembly that it was only a few months ago, in February, that we passed the electoral amendment act.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order! Could you sit down for a minute, please, Mr Gentleman? I cannot name the standing order at the moment, but there is a specific standing order relating to how we in this place deal with the judiciary and other courts, and that we must treat them respectfully. I think you used the term "show trial" in relation to the royal commission. It is my ruling that that reflects inappropriately on the royal commission and the royal commissioner, and I would ask you to withdraw it.

**Mr Rattenbury:** Madam Speaker, I seek your guidance. Is the royal commission a court for the purposes of your ruling? Does it have that status?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The standing order, the number of which I cannot remember, states:

A Member may not use offensive words against the Assembly or any Member thereof or against any member of the judiciary.

To say that the royal commissioner was conducting a show trial is, by my ruling, offensive against the royal commissioner.

**Mr Rattenbury:** May I seek your guidance then? Mr Wall made a range of assertions about the likely outcome of that royal commission. I think that is interesting in the context of the royal commission not drawing its conclusions yet. Can I seek your guidance on where the boundary lies about what one is able to say, and also presumably about the conduct of the royal commission?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** What I am saying on this occasion is that standing order 54 says that you will not say offensive words about a member of the judiciary. I have ruled, and I am still waiting for Mr Gentleman to withdraw the words “show trial” in relation to that. When he does that, I will discuss that issue.

**Mr Rattenbury:** On your ruling, Mr Gentleman’s comments referred to the construct of the royal commission, not the member of the judiciary who is conducting the royal commission.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am sorry. My ruling is about saying that the royal commission is a show trial, and the constraints of the standing orders in this place, which say that a member may not use offensive words against a member of the judiciary. I would like that withdrawn. I have heard it said out in the public domain, but that is not this Legislative Assembly. I am not the Speaker out there; I am in here. Would you withdraw, please, Mr Gentleman?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I will withdraw.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before we proceed, and before I call Mr Gentleman, I think you were present, Mr Rattenbury, when I made some comments earlier in the piece about this. I said there could be no discussion of charges before the courts, and there has been no discussion of charges before the courts, and that I expected this to be respectful. For the most part it has been, but I do not recollect that Mr Wall hypothesised about—

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, could we please stop the clock?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am sorry; I thought I had already asked for the clock to be stopped some time ago. I do apologise. I did not hear Mr Wall hypothesise about an outcome. Also, in referring to the standing orders, I did make the point that on page 174 it is stated:

The Senate has also taken the view that royal commissions and boards of inquiry which are not courts and to which the convention does not strictly apply are unlikely to be ...

And they were less likely to be influenced in their findings by parliamentary debate. I think that Commissioner Heydon is unlikely to be moved by the views of a member of the ACT Legislative Assembly about the outcomes. I call Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I might respond to your comments before I continue with my contribution to the debate. Whist I did withdraw the specific words that you required me to withdraw, I was quoting other people, Madam Speaker—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do not respond. I have made a ruling, and I made the ruling in the context of what other people have said in the past. It is about what is acceptable in this place.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I understand. I will be very careful, Madam Speaker, to watch the proceedings of this Assembly over four years and see how other quotes that are made—

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

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

**Dr Bourke:** I am seeking a ruling from you, Madam Speaker, in regard to the status of the royal commission. I understand that the royal commissioner is a retired judge; therefore he is not a member of the judiciary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sit down. He is a royal commissioner. He is entitled to the title of “judge”. He is a member of the judiciary, even though he has retired from the High Court. For the purposes of being a royal commissioner, he is a member of the judiciary.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I was coming to Mr Wall’s motion at (1)(d), which mentions the financial contribution made by the CFMEU to the Australian Labor Party. Can I remind the Assembly that it was only a few months ago, in February, that we passed the electoral amendment act, with its focus on the disclosure of political donations. On the passing of these new arrangements, Mr Hanson was quoted on Friday, 20 February by the ABC as saying that he thought the act made sure that we had the appropriate scrutiny on the political process and donations. I can assure the Assembly that all donations made to the ACT Labor Party by the CFMEU and any other union are open, recorded, in the public domain and transparent. We have nothing to hide here.

Indeed I would caution members opposite about throwing too many stones when it comes to a political party’s financial management. In recent years I seem to recall the Canberra Liberals’ failure to report a \$296,000 bank overdraft until the detail was



published by Fairfax media. This is quite apart from the disputed \$140,000 Australia Post debt. We have also seen a separate \$20,000 Australia Post bill for the former Canberra Liberal leader, Mr Seselja, charged twice, both to Mr Seselja's former Legislative Assembly account and to the office of former senator Gary Humphries. In late 2013 the Canberra Liberals were fined \$16,500 for breaching the electoral disclosure laws by failing to report almost \$40,000 that it received in gifts and donations. When it comes to political donations, the Canberra Liberals are not best placed to lecture us. Donations made to ACT Labor, including those from the CFMEU, are transparent and will remain that way.

It is to the CFMEU's great credit that it has succeeded in working so hard to improve workplace health and safety practices on construction sites, and reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on worksites across the ACT. As minister for industrial relations and workplace safety, I will continue to defend the rights of the CFMEU and all trade unions in playing an active role in the protection of their members by promoting workplace health and safety and challenging unhealthy and unsafe workplace practices.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (4.05): I want to make a couple of comments about the CFMEU and some of the work the CFMEU has done in the ACT community. When Wayne Vickery was killed on a work site in west Macgregor, at the doorstep of his family home at the time when the police turned up to inform the family that Wayne had passed away, who was there? The CFMEU. When Kay Catanzariti's son was killed during a concrete pour in Kingston, who was there? The CFMEU. When Jayson Bush fell into a void when the Nishi building was being constructed suffering lifelong injuries, who was there and who continues to be there for him and his family? The CFMEU.

The CFMEU has provided support for a number of different organisations across the ACT. In the last couple of years they have supported the Bosom Buddies organisation, which supports women who have experienced breast cancer. They organised a fundraiser at a cricket game in Manuka, and who was there? Brendan Smyth was there supporting the CFMEU. I note he is not here in the Assembly for this debate. Perhaps he is the only person in the Canberra Liberals that does support the CFMEU.

In many organisations there are bad eggs—even in the Liberal Party and even in some businesses. It is the actions of some of these individuals that can sometimes taint the good work of organisations in carrying out their lawful activities. Union organising is not a crime. Protecting workers rights is not a crime. Ensuring workers get home safely from their work sites is not a crime. I will be the first to condemn anybody who acts criminally or breaks the law, but I will always stand with the rights of workers and their unions to organise to protect their rights at work.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (4.07): Today we see a prime example of

policy-free politics from those opposite. This is a motion designed to elicit a headline, and it is presumably intended to help deflect the tension from the travel entitlements scandal plaguing their colleagues on the hill. But then on the very day they managed to get a headline on this matter, they also landed a front page on entitlements more locally. That is a home goal.

It is disappointing, but not surprising, to see Mr Wall trying to make hay from the royal commission. All politics, no policy; it is an obvious attempt to continue the Liberal Party's war on the unions and, as part of that, a war on workers' rights and entitlements. I think we need to remember the importance of worker health and safety and that there are still valid issues about worker safety especially in construction sites in the ACT.

Tragically, the ACT has a poor record when it comes to industrial deaths and injuries. Unions play an important part in helping to address these issues through education, support, surveillance and contributions to policy development. I am confident that the union's efforts on issues such as construction site safety have made a material difference in the improvements we have seen in the last few years in the ACT. It has been a clear focus of the CFMEU, the ALP and the Greens over the last few years, and I am pleased with the progress of the building quality forum, the *Getting Home Safely* report and their resulting activities.

Members are, of course, well aware of the ongoing royal commission into trade union governance. It is the second royal commission of the Abbott government which they have conducted into the Labor Party essentially since taking office just two years ago. As far as I am aware, the commission has not yet asked how effective unions have been in improving the safety of Canberra work sites. It has been well reported that both Fihi Kavalu and John Lomax have both been arrested and charged regarding their conduct as CFMEU officials.

The royal commission has certainly raised issues that need to be investigated, but it is also important to note that there are at least two sides to every story. On the one hand there are allegations of intimidation and blackmail, and on the other hand the union says its members are being unfairly prosecuted for simply demanding that companies pay their workers the minimum wage and put it in an enterprise agreement. Given the matters are currently before the courts, I will refrain from speaking further again on these cases. That is what we should all be doing if we are to be fair to these individuals. Remember, they are likely to appear before the courts to have a trial, and it is not appropriate to assume anyone is guilty of crimes for which they are only accused. But I will say that if any CFMEU officials are ultimately found guilty, I expect they will also be found to be the exception to the rule; they will be the few bad apples spoiling the barrel.

We know that unions in this country have a rich history of achievement, of fighting fiercely but fairly for the rights of workers. To write off an entire organisation based on the conduct of a few would be rash and reckless. It would be like writing off the entire Liberal Party based on the extravagance and hubris of Bronwyn Bishop.

In terms of its structure and membership neither the Greens, nor I, have any special relationship with unions. In my role as the Greens' crossbench member I have met with the CFMEU on a handful of times since the last election, just as I have met with many other organisations, such as the Housing Industry Association, the Master Builders Association and, undoubtedly, some groups who funded the Canberra Liberals' election campaigns and made donations to the Canberra Liberals, on previous occasions. And, of course, I will continue to meet with unions, including the CFMEU, on industrial relations, on worker safety and any other matters of common ground or, indeed, of disagreement.

Of course, there are areas of disagreement across the policy spectrum. Remember, the CFMEU represents people who work in mining and forestry, as well as construction. We are not always in agreement, but in the ACT the focus of the CFMEU is the construction sector, and the Greens have a strong industrial relations policy in this area. In terms of the mining and forestry arms of the union, it is important to note that the Greens have never swayed on our firm policy positions when it comes to issues like protecting the environment and transitioning to a carbon-free renewable energy-based future.

The motion points out in a rather desperate and base attempt at smearing that the CFMEU have donated to the Greens Party. Well, yes they have. That is a matter of public record. Why did they do this? As the CFMEU have publicly stated, those donations were in their members' interests because the Greens have excellent IR policies. Greens' policies are focused on supporting workers on fair industrial relations arrangements and on safety, and we will continue to push for progress in these areas in parliaments across Australia.

Based on their policies, the Liberal Party will not be expecting any donations from unions any time soon. Time after time they vote against initiatives brought to this Assembly to improve the situation of workers. A few standout issues are their opposition to the harmonised work, health and safety regime and their opposition to portable long service leave for mobile industries, such as security workers and cleaners. In fact, members may remember that a few years ago Mrs Dunne expressed the Liberal Party's more expansive view on long service leave, which was that there probably should not be any long service leave at all, let alone in the portable long service leave area. What a backward step that would be for the hardworking people of Australia.

On the issue of donations, I emphasise again that the Greens, including the ACT Greens branch, have an extremely sound and ethical donations policy. It is incontestable that our approach to donations, campaign funding and the integrity of the political system is most in line with public sentiment. The ACT Greens believe political campaigns should be funded through limited public funding. We believe political campaigns should not be reliant on third-party donations. We believe this because public funded elections promote more equitable access to democratic participation and reduce the risk of corruption through donations.

In the current situation where donations, including gifts in kind as defined by the Australian Electoral Commission, are used by parties throughout the political cycle, the ACT Greens, using transparent practices, will accept donations subject to ethical review. The ethical review is performed by the ACT Greens donations reference group. This group applies the Greens' donations policy to any donation referred to it, including any donations totalling over \$1,000 within a 12-month period. The Greens' donation policy is available on our website, but I will mention key points here for the benefit of members.

The policy seeks to ensure that the values and aspirations of all donors are consistent with those encapsulated in the policies and charter of the ACT Greens. The party is able to accept donations only in support of the existing aims of the party. To be clear about this, we do not change our policy as a result of any donation. Our policies are developed and ratified by the membership of our party. The policy makes clear that the acceptance of a donation does not imply endorsement of the activities, undertakings or processes of the donor. The ACT Greens maintain transparency in donor identity by making public at the end of each three-month period all donors and the cumulative total of their donations to the ACT Greens, over the previous 12-month period, whose cumulative totals amount of \$1,000 or more.

This is above and beyond the requirements of the ACT Electoral Commission, and it is above and beyond the standards that either the Labor Party or the Liberal Party hold themselves to. Would the Greens accept donations from developers like the other parties do? No. Would the Greens accept donations from defence contractors or pharmaceutical companies or mining companies, like the other parties do? No, we would not. The Greens only accept donations through our donations reference group, and they must be consistent with our values and principles. Through this process in the past the Greens have accepted donations from the CFMEU. Will that happen again in the future? That is not for me to say. As always, any donation will go through the party's process and the party will make a decision, based on its ethics and principles.

This is not the first time we have had cause to discuss the low standards to which other parties hold themselves. It was in February this year that both the Canberra Liberals and ACT Labor joined together to remove any donation caps from ACT electoral law. One would have thought any MLA in this place who believed in improving our democratic institutions and reducing the risk of corruption would have supported measures that would reduce potential influence that can be bought through political donations. But not the two parties here, not on the day that it counted, and certainly not Mr Wall. It was one of those 16 to one votes that happen in this place that show the Canberra Liberals' true colours far more clearly than their set piece private members business.

Madam Speaker, I must admit that I anticipated this motion would be out of order. It seeks to bind the Assembly to direct the activities of political parties, and I would be very interested to hear the guidance about exactly which legislative power that direction would stem from. Interestingly, it also seeks to determine the membership structure of the ALP, which is a matter for them, not a matter for the Assembly, and certainly not a matter for the Canberra Liberals. This motion sinks to a new low, in terms of policy-free politics, and the ACT Greens will certainly not be taking ethical advice from any branch of the Liberal Party.

**MR HANSON** (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.17): I commend Mr Wall for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. It is a very important motion and although those opposite would try to discount this or, indeed, the whole royal commission as just a political exercise, the reality is that the facts of the matter, as outlined extremely well by Mr Wall, explain the picture not only of what has been occurring in the royal commission but also of the very close linkages between the CFMEU, the Labor Party and the Greens, both politically and financially.

This is what has brought the opposition, led by Mr Wall in this case, to this point where it is prudent that those members of this place who do have such close financial and political links to the CFMEU through their parties make sure that that is set aside for the duration of this royal commission. It is not an unusual practice in life that when there are allegations made, when there are concerns raised, people step aside, pending the outcome. And that is what is being called for today. I think ultimately it would be in everybody's interest, in particular the interests of the Greens and Labor Party members here today.

There is no doubt that the events and the matters brought forward before the royal commission are very disturbing. What they show is a picture that I think everybody in this community would consider unacceptable. It has been something that has been played out extensively not just in the royal commission but in the media. Indeed commentary in the media has been interesting. Jack Waterford, a very well-known Canberra editor and journalist, has made some comments. He has called for an ICAC as a result of the evidence he has seen. He wrote an article damning of what he has seen of union behaviour and has talked extensively in that article about the linkages with political parties.

I think that the linkages, particularly with the Labor Party, are of concern. We know that one of the individuals before the royal commission as a result of charges laid has now stepped down, has been suspended, I believe, from the Labor Party and has stood down from the position of a sub-branch president of the Labor Party. If you look at the website as to what the sub-branches do, they are responsible for the formulation of policy as well as other issues. But he was replaced by another CFMEU organiser who is also facing court action, and that member has not been suspended.

Indeed the secretary of the Labor Party was asked about this issue, and I think his response is illustrative of a culture within the Labor Party that causes so many people concern. When he was asked these questions as to why the former sub-branch president had been suspended but the current sub-branch president has not, his response on 17 July on ABC news was, "If we started throwing people out of the Labor Party for fines, then we probably wouldn't have any members left." I think that is an extraordinary statement from somebody who is the secretary of the party of government which has suspended a member who is facing charges and who was replaced by a CMFEU organiser who is facing court action.

Rather than say, "No, that man will step aside," or take any action, the response is—and let me say it again because it is an extraordinary quote, I think probably the most extraordinary quote and most extraordinary thing I have heard in my time in politics

in the ACT, from a secretary of the Labor Party—and I say it again, “If we started throwing people out of the Labor Party for fines, then we probably wouldn’t have any members left.” That is the standard being set by the Labor Party. That is what they are saying is their standard, that so many of their members are facing fines or court action and would be fined and if they were to suspend or throw those members out they would have no-one left. That is an extraordinary thing to say.

I think that comes in part to the point of this motion today: if the Labor Party itself took action, if the Labor Party and the Greens were to say, “We’ve got a problem here. Let’s show some leadership, let’s take some action,” I think the community would be satisfied. The community would be pleased, I think, to see that the Labor Party acknowledged that there was a real cultural problem here. But by virtue of the fact that the secretary of the Labor Party came out and said, “No, we’re happy to keep everybody in the Labor Party,” it seems it is almost a badge of honour in the Labor Party that you have to be a member that is facing some form of court action or fines.

The integration between the Labor Party and the unions, again, is of concern. The secretary of the CFMEU, Mr Dean Hall, who was at that royal commission yesterday explaining himself, is the leader of the union, the CFMEU. He is also, as I understand it, the chair of the Tradies board and was a delegate to the Labor Party national conference. He was one of the seven chosen ones from Labor to go and say at the national conference that this is what the ACT Labor Party believes. Who was picked? The man who was at the royal commission yesterday, the man who runs the CFMEU in this town and whose members and others have been providing evidence about the practices of the CFMEU. And the Labor Party think that that is okay. They think that that is the way to approach it.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Stop the clock.

**Mr Gentleman:** I understand in your deliberations earlier you said that you did not want to see individuals named during this process. Mr Hanson has named one of the members of the CFMEU several times in relation to the commission. I would ask you to take some action on that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry, to be quite clear, I at no stage made a statement that I did not want people named. I do note in passing that Mr Rattenbury did name people who were subject of charges, which I thought was unfortunate, but it was only mentioned once. Mr Wall referred to charges on one occasion but to the best of my recollection did not name anyone. Mr Hanson has not named anyone who is subject to charges; that is my recollection. But I think that within the constraints of the sub judice rules it is not inappropriate to mention the names of people whose evidence has been broadcast publicly. I do not think that it would be appropriate to speculate on evidence that has not come forward or what evidence might come forward. I think that that would be inappropriate. But to speak about evidence that has been heard in open court and has been reported upon is well and truly within the confines of the sub judice rules.

I did make the point, in referring to the standing orders and the *Companion*, that the *Companion* also says at one place that members should not be intimidated or afraid of making a comment for fear that there may be charges in the future. I have actually made it very clear that if there are charges on foot, which there are, they should not be discussed. But it is quite within the possibility for members to discuss evidence. It seems to me not to be improper. I have a fair amount of discretion under the sub judice rules. I do not consider it improper to refer to evidence about particular people and to use their names. But in the same way I have to remind members that members of the public do not have the same rights to response as members of this Assembly do, except through a citizen's right of reply. I think that members need to be mindful of that.

I did not at any stage say that members should not be named but there are the general conventions of this place that people should do that sparingly. Also, they should not be constrained in anticipation that there may or may not be charges in the future.

**MR HANSON:** I will turn my attention to the Greens then because I find it perplexing that the organisation, the CFMEU, that is responsible for basically pushing activity in the construction sector and the forestry sector and runs a massive pokie organisation would be an organisation that the Greens wish to associate themselves with. It seems inexplicable, doesn't it, Madam Speaker? Why would those two organisations want to be aligned? But then you have to look at the fact that the Greens have been the recipients of tens of thousands of dollars from the CFMEU. Is that pokie money? Is it construction money? Is it forestry industry money? It is difficult to know the worst, perhaps.

Certainly we will look with interest at what the Greens do in the federal Senate when it comes to issues like the Australian Building and Construction Commission which is endeavouring to clean up the construction industry. Was it essentially trying to say, "Let's have a policeman on the beat to make sure that we can look, to make sure there is no corruption, there is no coercion, there is not bribery and blackmail happening here and we have got a cop on the beat"? Why wouldn't we want that? Why wouldn't the Greens want that? Why wouldn't the Greens want a commission on that? I am perplexed.

Again there are rules governing unions that are before the Senate. Those rules would make sure that unions come under the same sort of judiciary requirements and rules as do businesses. Why wouldn't that be a reasonable thing? Again it would be very interesting to see whether the Greens support those sorts of motions or bills in the Senate, noting that they are recipients of tens of thousands of dollars from the union movement. Indeed the local ACT Greens are not immune in any sense.

Just quickly on this odd line that Mr Gentleman had about domestic violence, it was in this place this morning that government failed to support a motion calling on the government to actually establish a DV court. I find it a little odd that I am to be lectured on this on this day, by this government that refused to support action to establish a domestic violence court—odd that you would lead with your chin on that one perhaps, through you, Madam Speaker, to Mr Gentleman.

I commend Mr Wall's motion. I hope it has the support of members and if they do not support this today I think they should look within them, look within their organisations, and make sure that the conduct of their organisations is in the best interest of the ACT and that we once and for all get rid of any malpractice or worse in this town. (*Time expired.*)

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (4.31), in reply: I must say that members on this side of the chamber are most disappointed that there has been an unwillingness to take action by those opposite today, to put their foot down and say that the actions as outlined in the royal commission are not acceptable. I think it flies in the face of what the business community and those many business operators in the construction industry that I have spoken to and that have contacted my office in recent times about the actions of the royal commission expect. They have been snubbed by those opposite who ultimately refuse to take any action here today and refuse to state that that behaviour as outlined in the royal commission, being perpetrated by the CFMEU, is unacceptable in the ACT.

**Mr Gentleman:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order again, Mr Wall continues to allege that something improper has occurred. The evidence in the commission has not yet been decided. There are some charges laid. There is no court process. But he continues to allege that our association is improper and that those people that have appeared before the commission have done something wrong. It is not the case.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** On the point of order, Mr Wall could you—I think I know what you said—repeat what you said?

**MR WALL:** I was referencing the allegations that have been raised in the royal commission towards the CFMEU. I was not making a personal aspersion on whether or not those allegations are in fact substantiated.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think that this is the space that this debate has to be in. There are allegations, they are out in the public arena, they have been reported at length and on high rotation in the media. I cannot see any problem in repeating the allegations in those terms in this place. It would be improper for—

**MR WALL:** Can we stop the clock please?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Sorry. Yes, could we stop the clock. It would be improper for a member of this place to say that this allegation proves that someone has acted inappropriately. That would be wrong. But I do not know that I have heard anyone do that.

**MR WALL:** I might just for a moment, in closing, refer to Mr Rattenbury's comments when he said that it was all politics and no policy. Of course, he, as a member of the Greens, has 92½ thousand reasons why that would be the position he would adopt. I do recall from my time in this place that at some point someone from the Greens stated that the donations they accept from the CFMEU are from the construction arm, not the forestry, not the mining, not the energy sector but the construction arm, of the CFMEU. It raises the question of whether or not the \$92½ thousand the Greens have received is potentially dirtier money than it may have been had it come from the mining arm of the CFMEU.



I make reference to the saying “birds of a feather stick together”. Those opposite seem as though they are going to stick together with their union mates. To defend them in the light of the allegations that we have heard recently in the ACT relating to the ACT construction industry would make them ostriches. They have had their heads in the sand and it is naive to think that just because they are the beneficiaries of this union’s largesse they should defend them every step of the way whilst there are substantial claims about the impropriety that these people are acting with on ACT construction sites.

But really the crux of it is that it is the businesses that have risked all and stood up, taken a stand and explained in detail the experiences that they have had, the intimidation they have faced, the harassment they have faced. Even an ACT public servant—and I will mention that in light of Mr Gentleman’s answer in question time today that he was not aware of any issue between the CFMEU and WorkSafe—knows about this. I point to evidence on the royal commission website, a witness statement from Joseph David Bartlett, who I believe is still a WorkSafe inspector with the JACS Directorate. He spoke of his experience on 25 February where he had a call from Claxton Construction on the after-hours WorkSafe phone. Mr Rossi had called him and said that there were union officials at a construction site in Mitchell wanting to stop a concrete pour.

Mr Bartlett’s statement goes on to detail the processes, step by step, that he took. He says that he became quite intimidated. This is at point 19 in Mr Bartlett’s statement:

I then had a conversation with Mr Hall and told him words—

Sorry, I have got the wrong point there. I have skipped a page. Needless to say, Mr Bartlett outlines point by point the steps that he went through in his job, diligently, to carry out his role as an inspector, albeit a new inspector. He does make reference to the fact that at that time he had only been in the job for some nine months and that he also called for backup to ensure that the decisions that he was making on the site were in fact correct. I am just trying to find the wonderful point—

**Mr Gentleman:** Where he shut the site down.

**MR WALL:** That is right—where the union movement was demanding that he shut the site down. He said that a certain union organiser, Mr Hall from the CFMEU, did not seem happy with his decision to not close the site as the engineer had already signed off on the formwork. He said of Mr Hall:

He got up close into my personal space and shouted aggressively at me, yelling at me words to the effect of ‘if you don’t—

and I am going to omit the “f” word there—

close the site and someone dies, you’ll go to jail!

That kind of language in a professional workplace setting I do not think is acceptable, it should not be tolerated by anyone. That is just one such example of a union official intimidating an ACT public servant, not to mention the vast array of claims that we have heard of similar practices being undertaken towards private operators in the ACT construction industry.

Today was an opportunity for those opposite to take a stand, to adopt a zero tolerance policy and to be clear on what the expectations are on ACT construction sites. Mr Gentleman said it is the role of the courts to deal with these issues. That is certainly the case. Previous allegations of past conduct and criminal offences that have occurred are the responsibility of the police and the courts to see that process through thoroughly but it is up to you, as the relevant Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, and those members opposite forming government to take a stand and set the framework for what is and what is not acceptable behaviour in the construction industry in the ACT.

I think today is going to be met with great disappointment by a large chunk of the community, given that those opposite are more attached to the teat of the CFMEU than they are to the good governance of this territory. I find that appalling.

**Ms Burch:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, there was a direct reference to financial support of the CFMEU for government and I ask you to ask Mr Wall to withdraw that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, I am not going to do that. It is in the terms of the motion. If you had a problem with direct reference to funding from the CFMEU to government you should have taken it up and asked me to rule on the motion. So I am not accepting a point of order on this. Everyone has accepted that this motion is here. No-one asked me to rule on it and it has been on the notice paper since lunch-time yesterday.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Mr Coe	Ms Lawder
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall
Mr Hanson	

Noes 8

Mr Barr	Mr Corbell
Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

## **Travel to the Republic of Taiwan Statement by Speaker**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the Clerk, I wish to update members on a statement I made yesterday about an invitation by the government of Taipei for me to lead a delegation to Taiwan between 17 and 23 August.

As I said yesterday, and as I said to members in an email when the invitation was issued to members of this Assembly, the government of Taipei has extended an invitation to me to lead a delegation on a visit to Taiwan. In making that invitation, the government of Taipei also indicated that it will pay all associated travel and accommodation costs and will host the delegation on some elements of hospitality during the visit. In making the invitation, the government of Taipei extended the same invitation on the same basis to my senior adviser. The invitation does not extend to spouses or partners. Members will recall that the invitation was extended to all members of the Assembly to nominate for the delegation. As Speaker, along with Dr Bourke, Mr Wall and my senior adviser, I accepted the invitation of the government of Taipei.

On the basis that this invitation is a gift of the government of Taipei involving no taxpayer-funded expenditure by the Assembly, all those participating in the delegation are required to declare their receipt of the gift in an appropriate manner. In the case of MLAs, that is through their statement of registrable interests, which is published on the ACT Legislative Assembly webpage. In the case of my senior adviser, this is to me as his employer.

In some quarters, there has been a conflating of taxpayer-funded members' entitlements, most of which have been turned into salary in the case of the ACT, and the acceptance or otherwise of third-party gifts. For members, and indeed their staff, the rules that apply to gifts are covered by the members code of conduct. The rules that apply to members' remuneration entitlements are made by the ACT Remuneration Tribunal.

Travel funded by a third party with no direct financial connection to the Assembly amounts to the receipt of a gift and must be declared, and in certain circumstances it would have to be declared to the Electoral Commission. However, I have received conflicting and changing advice about third-party funded travel, particularly on the question of accompanied travel funded by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Today I asked the chair of the Remuneration Tribunal if the tribunal could review all the issues I have outlined, including those related to third-party gifts, even though they were not associated with members' direct remuneration. In response, the chair of the Remuneration Tribunal has told me that the request falls outside the remit of the tribunal under the Remuneration Tribunal Act.

Therefore, as an initial step, I will ask the Assembly's Ethics and Integrity Adviser for his advice on the specifics of my acceptance, and that of my senior adviser, of the

invitation from the government of Taipei. Other members of the delegation may wish, or not, to seek their own advice as appropriate in their own circumstances. I will make a final decision in relation to this invitation after I see the ethics adviser's advice.

In addition to other matters I have outlined, I will also ask the ethics adviser to look at the wider issues associated with third-party gifts, including travel, and to consult the Clerk on this matter. This will include whether the receiving and reporting of third-party gifts need to be better codified and reported.

I will release all advice from the Ethics and Integrity Adviser as it comes to hand to me. I want to make it clear that I will release advice that I have sought in relation to my travel to Taiwan and that of my senior adviser. I will waive the privilege on that and any advice that the Ethics and Integrity Adviser, in consultation with the Clerk, gives in relation to the wider issue of codification and reporting.

I hope that this approach will help to clarify what has become a matter of confusion and misinterpretation.

## Homelessness

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.47): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) 3-9 August 2015 is Homelessness Prevention Week;
- (b) the Evaluation of Reforms to the ACT Specialist Homelessness Service System Evaluation Report was released on 3 August 2015;
- (c) homelessness results in substantial social and economic costs to individuals, families, communities, governments and the nation as a whole;
- (d) research shows that the cost of rough sleeping to the community is more than \$27 000 per person per year and this cost rises the longer a person experiences homelessness;
- (e) homelessness makes it hard to maintain school or further study and leaves people vulnerable to long-term unemployment and chronic ill-health;
- (f) approximately 1758 people are experiencing homelessness in the ACT;
- (g) First Point data shows that 726 people were waiting for accommodation and homelessness support from First Point in May 2015;
- (h) the Dropping off the Edge 2015 Report shows that disadvantage is concentrated in a small number of communities in the ACT;
- (i) Canberra's affordable housing crisis and long public housing waiting lists make it very difficult for people to get out of homelessness;

- (j) having a safe and secure place to live enables a person to live a socially inclusive life and access education, health and employment opportunities;
  - (k) the solution to homelessness lies in providing affordable housing, addressing the long public housing waiting lists and providing targeted support that enables people to sustain their tenancies, and
  - (l) on 17 June 2015 the former ACT Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, said that his biggest regret while Chief Minister was housing affordability, land planning and supply; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) develop and implement a realistic framework by October 2015 to address Canberra's affordable housing crisis and increase the supply of affordable housing in the ACT;
  - (b) develop and implement a realistic framework by October 2015 to address Canberra's long public housing waiting lists; and
  - (c) to report back to the Assembly in September 2015 on progress.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to move this motion today and bring the Assembly's attention again to the fact that it is Homelessness Prevention Week. I would like to talk about the ACT's current homelessness landscape as well as the housing affordability crisis that we are experiencing.

Homelessness Prevention Week, which in 2015 runs from 3 to 9 August, aims to raise community awareness and understanding of the causes and complexities of homelessness and the effects it has, to increase community connections for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In previous years it was called Homeless Persons Week. The narrative has shifted from disadvantage to advantage this year: it shifted from being Homeless Persons Week to being Homelessness Prevention Week.

On Monday I was pleased to attend the official launch of Homelessness Prevention Week by my colleague Ms Berry, the Minister for Housing. I participated in a panel discussion where we focused on the theme of Homelessness Prevention Week, stepping up to end youth homelessness in Canberra.

Also on Monday, the *Evaluation of reforms to the ACT specialist homelessness service system* report was released. This report provides an evaluation of reforms to the ACT's specialist homelessness service system between 2009 and 2014. The report made a large number of findings about specialist homelessness services in the ACT, including the following:

The proportion of service users with high needs has increased ... and now account for 35 per cent of service users ...

The gap most commonly identified by service providers was the inability to provide the desired level of service intensity ...

The second biggest gap was the inability to find social housing and private rental accommodation for people moving out of the specialist homelessness service sector. The report said:

Gaps are also evident for certain service user groups who are less likely to be able to access support services, less likely to have their needs met, or less likely to have stable housing on exit. The following groups were reported by services to be less likely to be able to access SHS—

specialist homelessness service—

accommodation supports due to a mismatch between their needs and eligibility for specific service providers: women with children not experiencing or fleeing domestic violence, particularly women with adolescent male dependants; couples over 25; young people under 15 years of age; refugees and people with pets.

The report said:

... young people were more likely to have an unmet need for accommodation and more likely to exit into unstable accommodation. The analysis also found that women were more likely to have an unmet need for accommodation ... While those with poor accommodation situations on entry were more likely to have their housing needs met, they were nine times more likely to experience an exit into unstable accommodation than other clients.

Exits into stable accommodation in the ACT have declined. Applications for public housing in the ACT have more than doubled since 2008. Finally, many public housing applicants still have high expectations of being placed in a preferred public housing property when that outcome is not likely to be achieved. Earlier today we spoke about the issue of the public housing waiting list.

The findings of the report are quite alarming, I believe, although the ACT government media release put a very positive slant on it. It says that applications for public housing have more than doubled since 2008.

During estimates we heard that putting people who are relocating out of public housing along Northbourne Avenue on a waiting list is in addition to the priority high needs and standard waiting lists. So the ACT government is making the wait times for applicants on the priority, high needs and standard waiting and transfer lists even longer—even longer than the figures we spoke about in question time today. How is that going to help address the increasing demand on our public housing waiting lists, which have more than doubled since 2008? Of course, we all know, and we have said it before in this place, that the ACT Labor-Greens government are relocating public housing tenants out of Northbourne Avenue so they can use the land for the light rail project.

The homelessness landscape in the ACT, from 2012 figures, was that 1,758 people were experiencing homelessness in the ACT. People on the ACT's priority housing waiting list will wait, on average, two years. People on the ACT standard housing waiting list will wait, on average, two years and three months. As at 3 August, there

were a total of 2,166 applications on Housing ACT's priority, high needs and standard waiting lists. As became clear during estimates hearings—I will repeat it—these 2,166 applications currently on the list do not include people being relocated out of public housing properties on Northbourne Avenue. There is, we heard during estimates, an additional waiting list for these people.

First Point data shows that 726 people were waiting for accommodation and homelessness support from First Point in May 2015—726 people. The costs of homelessness are high. Research shows that the cost of rough sleeping to the community is more than \$27,000 per person per year, and this cost rises the longer a person experiences homelessness. Not only does homelessness take a toll on the individual—it makes it hard to maintain school or study and it leaves people vulnerable to long-term unemployment and chronic ill health—but it takes a toll on the wider community. Having a safe and secure place to live enables a person to live a socially inclusive life and access education, health and employment opportunities.

On 17 June this year former ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said that his biggest regret while Chief Minister was housing affordability, land planning and supply. I will read from his article. I did not really know Jon Stanhope, though I met him once or twice in my professional capacity before I joined the Assembly. But from reading this particular article about his views on the affordable housing action plan, he sounds like a pretty reasonable kind of bloke to me. He says his greatest frustration or regret whilst Chief Minister was the issue of housing affordability, land planning and supply. I quote:

The Affordable Housing Action Plan, which I initiated in 2006, was not fully implemented at the time I left office in 2011 and has clearly still not been realised. This is despite all the levers for implementing the plan being in the hands of the ACT Government. It is not only in the position of a monopoly owner of all the land for sale it also controls and operates the land planning and regulatory regime applying to its use and disposal.

The Affordable Housing Action Plan is a comprehensive and innovative plan aimed at improving housing affordability for renters and those entering ownership. In particular, it provided a blueprint for overcoming barriers to home ownership experienced by a growing proportion of Canberra residents.

Those most affected by the crisis in affordability are, of course, young families and a large and growing cohort of Canberra households on moderate incomes who have been priced out of the market for a modest sized (three bedroom) detached house in suburban Canberra.

The previous Chief Minister says it is quite clear that the government's own affordable housing action plan has failed to deliver on what it promised.

It is unfortunate that this ACT Labor government has done little, if anything, to address and alleviate Canberra's affordable housing crisis. Canberra's affordable housing crisis and long public housing waiting list make it very difficult for people to get out of homelessness. We have fabulous homelessness services in the ACT; there are a number of fantastic people who work in the homelessness sector. But without exits from homelessness, without the provision of additional affordable housing,

people will never be able to exit from the homelessness support system. That is where we are falling down here. This is where the ACT Labor government is falling down.

Sure, we can talk about our fabulous homelessness services, but it is not enough to service people in homelessness at a cost of \$27,000 a year or more per person. We need to get people out into safe, secure, affordable housing that they can call their own. The solution to homelessness lies in providing affordable housing. We have to address the long public housing waiting lists and we have to provide the targeted support that enables people to sustain their tenancies. We have heard today about the great work done by Common Ground, and that is one good example. But it is not enough.

The Canberra Liberals want to see people have the opportunity to get into their own homes. What is the ACT government doing about this? What is it doing to make housing more affordable and reduce the public housing waiting lists? We are the national capital. We should lead the nation by breaking the homelessness cycle. What are we doing? We are leading the nation in renewable energy. Why can't we lead the nation in breaking the homelessness cycle? This government has different priorities.

We need to see a comprehensive assessment of some of the following. Firstly, there is the cost effectiveness and outcomes of current service models and forms of intervention offered in Canberra on prevention, early intervention or crisis responses to homelessness. We need to see the critical factors in Canberra for the stabilisation of housing and maintenance of good housing outcomes for people who have been experiencing homelessness. And we need to see changes in the whole service system to more effectively respond to people who are experiencing homelessness.

We need a long-term cross-portfolio investment and long-term procurement strategy that meet the demand for affordable housing in the bottom two income quintiles and reduce the number of people in Canberra who do not have a home to call their own. We need to see something that pools funds from across portfolios to maximise prevention and early intervention in homelessness, to reduce the demand for crisis services and to facilitate prompt access to and maintenance of stable, affordable, appropriate housing for people who have been experiencing homelessness. And we need to ensure that housing and homelessness support services can respond effectively to current and emerging needs.

I call on the ACT government to develop and implement a realistic framework by October 2015 to address Canberra's affordable housing crisis and increase the supply of affordable housing in the ACT. In theory, that framework should already be in place through the affordable housing action plan that former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope spoke about, which apparently is sitting on a shelf somewhere gathering dust rather than being implemented by the very government that brought it in.

I hope that this government gets the message that moving people out of Northbourne Avenue and only rehousing those people in new properties will not address or alleviate Canberra's long-term public housing waiting lists. It definitely will not address or alleviate the housing affordability crisis we are experiencing in the ACT. It does not help people experiencing homelessness who cannot exit from the homelessness service system.



In this week, Homelessness Prevention Week, surely we can all agree to have a focus on reducing homelessness and getting people into long-term supportive and stable housing. In this week, national Homelessness Prevention Week, I believe we all have that in-principle desire to make a difference and to step up to help people experiencing homelessness. But what we are lacking is action to make it happen. The government's own affordable housing action plan is not being implemented. There are structures already in place for this government; instead, they are focusing on other issues that they feel are more important. I say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker and other members of this Assembly: what can be more important than supporting our fellow Canberrans, those who are in the greatest need? Surely that is what is more important.

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social Inclusion and Equality) (5.02): I move:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) that this week is Homelessness Prevention Week;
- (b) that the Government released the independent report *Evaluation of Reforms to the ACT Specialist Homelessness Service System* on 3 August 2015;
- (c) the social and economic costs of homelessness to individuals and the broader community;
- (d) a person is defined as homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement is:
  - (i) in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
  - (ii) has no tenure, or initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
  - (iii) does not allow them to have control of, and access to, space for social relations;
- (e) on census night in 2011, approximately 1758 people in the ACT were counted as being homeless. This included:
  - (i) 1105 (62%) people in supported accommodation;
  - (ii) 316 (18%) staying temporarily with other households;
  - (iii) 280 (16%) living in severely crowded dwellings;
  - (iv) 55 (3%) in boarding houses/other temporary lodgings; and
  - (v) 29 (2%) sleeping rough;

- (f) that the First Point central intake service offers a diverse range of support to people seeking assistance for homelessness. This support ranges from accommodation services to putting people in touch with specific support services that can assist with their specific needs;
  - (g) that people remain on the list to allow First Point to follow up with them until their specific need has been fully addressed;
  - (h) the findings of the Dropping off the Edge Report support the work that the Government is doing in West Belconnen through Better Services to address location-based disadvantage;
  - (i) the work that the Government has been doing since 2007 on increasing the supply of affordable housing through the Affordable Housing Action Plan;
  - (j) that access to housing remains a challenge for people on low incomes in the ACT and across Australia and that a national approach is required to address this;
  - (k) that the ACT continues to provide the highest number of public housing homes per capita of any Australian jurisdiction;
  - (l) that public housing in the ACT is targeted to members of the community most in need; and
  - (m) the particular challenge facing the ACT as the hub of the capital region, with service providers noting that in the order of 20%-30% of demand for homelessness support is coming from people who have recently arrived in the ACT; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) continue its policy of providing public housing in the ACT to people who are most in need;
  - (b) continue seeking commitment from the Federal Government for appropriate funding of housing and homelessness services and a national approach to addressing issues of affordable housing;
  - (c) work with the NSW Minister for Housing and regional local governments on a regional approach to housing and homelessness;
  - (d) continue working with the private sector and local service providers on innovative options for people on low and middle incomes to access affordable housing, including community housing, affordable rentals and affordable homes for purchase; and
  - (e) make a report to the Legislative Assembly by the last sitting day in 2015 about progress on this work.”.

I thank Ms Lawder for bringing this motion forward today. This week I was pleased to launch Homelessness Australia's Homelessness Prevention Week here in the Assembly. Homelessness Prevention Week is an annual nationwide campaign to encourage people to step up, take action and prevent and end homelessness in Australia. Ms Lawder and I participated in a forum, step up to end youth homelessness, where we heard from a number of remarkable speakers who talked about their experiences in coping with homelessness or helping others in that situation. We also heard from a couple of the many community organisations stepping up to help end homelessness in our city. All of these speakers reminded us of not only the huge personal cost of homelessness to the individuals experiencing it but also the wider social and economic costs to society from people who are unable to live their lives to the fullest and contribute to their full potential.

Homelessness is not just about not having a roof over your head; a person is defined as experiencing homelessness by the Australian Bureau of Statistics if their housing does not meet a minimum community standard. Specifically, a person is defined as homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement (a) is in a dwelling that is inadequate, (b) has no tenure or initial tenure is short and not extendable or (c) does not allow them to have control of and access to space for social relations.

On census night every five years, the number of homeless people is estimated by counting the numbers of people in six different forms of temporary or inadequate housing. On census night in 2011, 1,758 people in the ACT were counted as being homeless. The majority of these people were in homeless accommodation—1,105 people—but 280 were living in severely crowded dwellings, 316 were staying temporarily with other households, 55 were staying in boarding houses or other temporary lodgings and 29 were sleeping rough in cars, in tents or on the streets.

As you would note from these figures, Madam Deputy Speaker, the largest group of homeless people in the ACT are being supported by specialist homelessness services. The ACT government, with commonwealth contributions, is providing \$20 million each year to 29 services to run 47 specialist programs. These services are doing a great job in supporting people who are presenting with complex needs and are in unstable housing situations.

The ACT is a caring community. We provide the highest level of funding per person to homelessness services of any jurisdiction in the country. The ACT spends an average of \$57.63 per person on homelessness services. This is the highest level of funding in the country. The national average is \$26.55 per person. The specialist homelessness programs provide a range of assistance, from free food services to crisis accommodation as well as support for people to maintain their tenancies so they do not become homeless in the first place. All groups are assisted, with programs for young people, women, men, families, people exiting correction services and those sleeping rough.

Access to services is managed by First Point, the ACT's centralised intake service. Importantly, those with the highest needs get priority access. Those who cannot be helped immediately remain on the list to allow First Point to follow up with them until their specific need has been fully addressed.

On Monday I released the independent report of an evaluation of reforms to the specialist homelessness service system in the ACT. From 2009 to 2014 the ACT government worked with Canberra's homelessness sector to implement major reforms that resulted from changes to the commonwealth funding. This was a major period of change, and we committed to involving service providers in the review of these reforms. The review found that services had increased programs to prevent homelessness; services were operating with enhanced integration; people were getting better results in areas like employment and education; and the centralised intake service was helping prioritise support to those who most need it.

The evaluation gives us a better understanding of the pressures on the specialist homelessness services system, what is working well and where we will need to focus more effort or try new approaches as we move forward. Our aim is to provide anyone in need of homelessness support with the help they need when they need it and for the right amount of time. It is a big challenge, but we want to continue to work with service providers to achieve it.

The ACT government is working hard to build a socially inclusive Canberra. The *Dropping off the Edge 2015* report by Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services, released in July 2015, identifies the most disadvantaged communities across Australia by applying a range of different social indicators. The findings of the report support the work that the government is doing in west Belconnen through better services to address location-based disadvantage. Through the better services initiative, including the one human services gateway, the local services network being piloted at west Belconnen and the strengthening families program, the ACT government is ensuring that all Canberrans have the capability to fully participate in strong, healthy and inclusive communities and are supported by a cohesive human services system.

The government's salt and pepper approach to distributing public housing across all suburbs in Canberra under the public housing renewal program also supports this objective and will maximise the benefits of mixed communities. The ACT continues to provide the highest number of public housing homes per capita of any Australian jurisdiction. We currently have almost 11,600 public housing properties and about 1,200 community housing properties. Collectively this represents about 30 social housing dwellings for every 1,000 people in the ACT. With the national average sitting at around 17 dwellings per 1,000 people, the ACT is achieving almost twice the national average.

Public housing is targeted to those most in need. In the last year, around 97 per cent of new tenancies have gone to the most vulnerable tenants. This is the highest level of targeted allocation across all jurisdictions. The ACT government is determined to continue providing public housing to those who have the greatest need. Public housing provides an important hand up for those members of our community who need it and assists in transitioning to other forms of housing as and when they are able.

Access to affordable housing has been a longstanding priority of this government. Since 2007 the government has introduced three separate phases of its affordable housing action plan. The plan focused on a range of interventions to increase the supply—improving housing and land supply to the market; increasing the diversity of

housing products; reducing barriers to home ownership; addressing homelessness; improving rental affordability; supporting ageing in place; and improving the efficiency of property taxes through the abolition of conveyance duty. Of course, there is more work to be done to ensure that there is enough high quality housing for people at all income levels within our community.

Housing affordability remains an issue right across the country in both regional and metropolitan locations. Last month's Council of Australian Governments meeting in Sydney identified housing as one of the four key priority areas for all levels of government. The ACT welcomes this clear statement of priority for housing matters. We will continue to work closely with the commonwealth government and with other states and territories to ensure that appropriate funding continues to be provided for housing and homelessness services.

Short-term funding arrangements from the commonwealth are simply not adequate or appropriate. The short-term funding arrangements create uncertainty for the housing and homelessness service providers and put in jeopardy funding for vulnerable members of our community. There are also clear opportunities for better collaboration between different levels of government, which we also support. I have recently written to the New South Wales minister to commence a conversation around a regional approach to housing. We are hearing from the local service providers that increasing numbers of their clients are people who have recently arrived from interstate. As the centre of a capital region, this is not an unexpected outcome, but we need to think smarter about how we provide services for people who are in need and how we fund those services.

The supply of affordable housing is a collaborative responsibility shared by the community, government and private sectors. The ACT has been working with the private sector, as part of the affordable housing action plan, in increasing the supply of affordable housing. Since releasing the first affordable action plan in 2007, the government has accelerated the release of land. Over the past five years, the government has released 19,500 dwelling sites at a time at a time when demand was estimated to be around 15,000. This release is almost double that of the previous five years. In the early days of the action plan, the government set a requirement for 15 per cent affordable housing in all new greenfield estates. This has since been increased to 20 per cent.

The land rent scheme is an important part of the government's affordable housing action plan and was introduced in 2008. The land rent scheme gives a homebuyer the option of renting land through a land rent lease rather than purchasing the land to build a home. This means that the homebuyer does not need to finance the cost of the land; they only need to finance the cost associated with the transfer of the land and the construction of the home. As of 30 June 2015, over 2,700 land rent contracts had been entered into.

The government has also loaned CHC Affordable Housing \$70 million to deliver 500 affordable dwellings for sale and 500 for rental by 2018. Support is also provided through the affordable rental office, which provides a secure housing product for eligible low to middle income older Canberrans. The government is committed to working with the private sector to explore innovative options for affordable housing across the ACT.

Having been appointed housing minister earlier this year, I continue to be awestruck by the dedication of the people who work in the housing and homelessness sector. The causes of homelessness are complex. Social housing is an important part of the solution and the government is committed to continuing with housing renewal and targeted allocation of its public housing stock to ensure that it provides vital assistance to people who are most in need.

The government will continue to work with the community sector, the private sector and state and federal governments to bring forward innovative affordable housing options for low and middle income earners. I am committed to look at the regional housing situation and initiating discussions with my New South Wales counterpart and the regional mayors to see how we can take a regional approach to ensuring people have access to housing. And the government will continue to advocate to the federal government for sustainable funding and a national approach to the complex issues that cause people to experience homelessness.

I look forward to providing more information on progress in these areas to the Assembly later this year. I think there has been a technical amendment made to my distributed amendment to Ms Lawder's motion. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (5.14): In 2014, while I still held the housing portfolio, I announced an evaluation of ACT specialist homelessness services, partly in response to reduced commonwealth funding to these vital services in the ACT that started a few years earlier. I was keen to see what impacts these funding shortfalls were having on local services and what areas required a better coordinated response. There was little solace to local providers to be had at the time of the federal funding cuts, but I can attest to the genuine engagement of all levels of Housing ACT to work with the sector to find the least detrimental impacts possible.

It was due to the strength of those relationships that the sector managed to adjust as well as it has. It was also in keeping with their concerns going forward that I asked Housing ACT to start work on the evaluation of reforms to the ACT's specialist homeless service system that Minister Berry released this week. I would like to read from the conclusion to that report before moving to the motion and the amendments. The conclusion states:

Over the reform period the SHS sector has experienced greater demand from service users with higher needs accessing the system in less stable housing situations. The SHS sector has provided more services, particularly non-accommodation supports, and has achieved better non-housing related outcomes for service users, especially in employment. However, while the ACT still has a much higher rate of exits into social housing than in other jurisdictions, exits into stable accommodation have declined over the period. Young people should remain a key focus as they are most likely to have an unmet housing need and most likely to exit into unstable accommodation.

These findings are not of any real surprise, but will, I am sure, help guide the ACT government's ongoing response to the issues of housing and homelessness.

That leads me to the motion before us. I will be supporting Minister Berry's amendment to Ms Lawder's motion today, as I think it both captures the issues at play a little better and also provides a clearer, more achievable and more tangible outcome.

Housing affordability, as we all know, is a vexed issue to pin down and define, particularly in the ACT, with our widely disparate gap between the highest and lowest incomes. And the issues of supply, land releases, developments and the new type of stock coming online are issues that keep economists awake at night and arguing throughout the day. The simplest response we hear in this place is to build more houses—build more and use government levers to ensure that a portion of all new housing developments are for social and affordable housing.

I note that Ms Lawder's motion makes a point to reference Mr Stanhope's comments regarding housing affordability. I think it is only fair to say that reports I have had from people who attended not just the opening statements but the full forum panel discussions were that there was a range of views about the issues. I understand that there were presentations from others there saying that the land release and supply program had in fact been very successful. While I am not making a judgement on these views, it is worth noting the divergence.

To be fair to the existing affordable action plan, now in phase 3, I believe, the government is taking action to improve housing affordability; but I accept that, partly due to the definition issues I outlined before and partly due to the economic realities of low incomes and changing employment, it is not the cure for the entire system. The same can be said for some of the commonwealth programs, such as the national rental affordability scheme, which in some cases saw properties being labelled as affordable when they were so in name only for many Canberrans.

We as a government and as a society, in partnership with the community and private sectors, need to explore new models and new ways of doing things. I am sure Ms Lawder is aware of some of these models, such as increased community housing, affordable rental programs and public-private partnerships operating in other jurisdictions. I agree we can do better and would like to see issues such as first home ownership for public housing tenants given new energy, and considerations of shared equity expanded, for example.

Ms Berry's amendment also does greater justice to the complexity of the issues. As the recently handed down report of the Australian Senate inquiry into housing affordability found:

The committee does not believe the issue of housing affordability in Australia is rightly categorised as either a 'supply-side problem' or a 'demand-side problem'.

Instead, the committee provided a range of recommendations directed primarily toward improving home purchase affordability. They include recommending that state

governments phase out conveyancing stamp duties, to be achieved through a transition to more efficient taxes, potentially including land taxation levied on a broader base than is currently the case. That is something the ACT government is seeking to do, and it is something the Canberra Liberals have argued vociferously against.

There were a number of other recommendations made with the intention of ensuring that urban planning and zoning processes have a positive effect on housing affordability. There was also a clear need for the improvement of current commonwealth and state and territory agreements—the national affordable housing agreement, NAHA, and partnership arrangements such as the national partnership agreement on homelessness, NPAH.

I could go on, but I will close by noting that the ACT is looking to undertake much of this work where applicable here and now, and yet we are still waiting for the commonwealth to come to the party. Ms Berry's amendment that seeks to work with regional local governments on a regional approach to housing and homelessness is also very welcome. It indicates a government responding to the evidence and taking the right steps forward. I look forward to seeing the report back to the Assembly on these actions to address these complex issues.

I thank Ms Lawder for her ongoing advocacy on housing and homelessness in the Assembly and for bringing this motion today. It is appropriate that the Assembly discuss these matters this week. I indicate that I will be supporting Ms Lawder's proposed amendment. She raises a subtle but nonetheless important point about terminology, and I am happy to support her amendment on that basis.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (5.22): I will speak to Ms Berry's amendment. I will focus a little more on the affordable housing action plan. It is mentioned very briefly in Ms Berry's amendment, in paragraph (1)(i), which says:

- (i) the work that the Government has been doing since 2007 on increasing the supply of affordable housing through the Affordable Housing Action Plan;

But as we have already heard, according to the former Chief Minister, Mr Stanhope, this report remains largely unimplemented. We also heard a comment earlier about the housing affordability issue right across the country. That is absolutely correct. But sometimes what happens for us here in the ACT is that when we compare our housing affordability to Sydney and Melbourne, it allows us to make it look like our housing is a bit more affordable because we are comparing it to Sydney, Melbourne or some other city. Of course, the median household income in the ACT makes those comparisons quite difficult. We have a median household income, according to the ABS, of around \$110,000 per household. But that is potentially nowhere near what the average household may have, which is probably more like \$90,000. That is far more likely than the median.

There is a saying that you are in a housing crisis if you spend more than 30 per cent of your income on your housing costs, whether that is rental or mortgage. As Mr Stanhope said in the article he wrote back in June this year, for a household with a



gross income of around \$90,000, an affordable house would therefore be one valued at around \$360,000. We all know that there are not many houses valued at \$360,000 in Canberra. There are very few for under \$400,000. So a family on a gross income of under \$100,000 would be in what we term housing stress or potentially even housing crisis in order to service a mortgage on a house valued at more than \$400,000. What happens in this case is that those in the lowest quintile, or indeed the lowest two quintiles, and increasingly creeping up into the lowest three quintiles, are the ones that are more and more disadvantaged in our unaffordable housing market.

I am surprised that there is no real mention of the affordable housing action plan in Ms Berry's amendment. The affordable housing action plan had a lot of good points. It has been largely unimplemented. It strikes me as another example that this government like to develop plans, designs, have consultations and then draw up their own plans without really taking the consultation into account. But once they have the plan, what do they do with it? The affordable housing action plan is one of those examples where it has not been fully implemented. It could have had some very useful measures to assist housing affordability in the ACT.

For a large and growing part of our Canberra community, housing remains unaffordable. That means more and more people are teetering on the brink of homelessness, and those people who are already experiencing homelessness will find it almost impossible to exit out of homelessness and into housing. That is partly why we are seeing the increasing demand on our public housing list—people cannot afford to enter the private housing market themselves.

Ms Berry referred to an amendment that has been circulated as a technical amendment. As we have both already spoken about, she was with me at the launch of Homelessness Prevention Week this week. I think it is more than a technical amendment. What is being acknowledged here is that these are people who are going through what should be, and for what many people is, a temporary part of their life, which is experiencing homelessness. But there should always be hope and an aspiration that they will move out of homelessness. We do not talk about the homeless or a person who is homeless; we talk about someone experiencing homelessness. So we always point to the fact that it is only a temporary part of their lives. I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

**MS LAWDER:** I move the following amendments to Ms Berry's proposed amendment:

- (1) In paragraph (1)(d), omit "a person is defined as homeless", substitute "a person is defined as experiencing homelessness".
- (2) In paragraph (1)(e), omit "were counted as being homeless", substitute "were counted as experiencing homelessness".

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Women and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Social

Inclusion and Equality) (5.27): With respect to Ms Lawder's amendments to my proposed amendment, I was not referring to her amendments when I talked about a technical amendment. I was referring to my amended amendment in which "per capital" was changed to "per capita". Just to be clear, I am happy to support Ms Lawder's amendments.

**Ms Lawder's amendments to Ms Berry's amendment agreed to.**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (5.28): In closing, I will be quite brief. I say many times at many events that I truly believe that all of us here in this Assembly have a commitment, a desire and a willingness to reduce and prevent homelessness. I really believe that is the case. What we need to do is step up and implement those plans, strategies and actions that will make that happen, rather than keep talking about it. There are a number of very good opportunities that we can take to reduce and prevent homelessness. Without increasing the supply of affordable housing, we will never be able to address the extent of homelessness. That is not to say that housing on its own is sufficient, and I think Ms Berry has certainly made that point. You need to address the causes of why someone has become homeless and you need to give them the support they need to maintain a tenancy when you do put them back into housing.

Housing is not the only solution to homelessness but it is a very important first step to addressing homelessness. I urge the government to do whatever it can to increase the supply of affordable housing. It is the other side of the coin to homelessness. I thank everyone for their contributions to the debate today.

**Ms Berry's amendment, as amended, agreed to.**

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## **Capital metro—car park closure during construction**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (5.30): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the recent Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed for Capital Metro proposes the closure of the London Circuit (North-West) car park (the car park) for the entirety of the four year construction period;
- (2) further notes that there has been much concern in the community regarding the closure of the car park because:
  - (a) there are currently 255 parking spaces provided by the car park;
  - (b) during business hours, the car park is routinely at 90-100% capacity;
  - (c) people with limited mobility frequently use the carpark to access medical and health treatment;
  - (d) the carpark is the most convenient location to park for solicitors and litigants entering the ACT Supreme Court or ACT Magistrates Court;

- (e) many people currently use the car park outside business hours to visit restaurants, bars and clubs in and around the Melbourne Building; and
  - (f) parking in other areas of the City is already stretched, making it likely that many people won't be able to park their car conveniently in the City; and
- (3) Calls on the ACT Government to rule out the closure of this car park.

The environmental impact statement, the EIS, prepared for capital metro shows that the ACT government is proposing to close the London Circuit north-west car park, commonly known as the Melbourne Building car park. According to the EIS, this car park will be closed for three to four years in order to facilitate the construction of light rail by providing a compound for construction workers to park their cars and also space to store some large machinery that is required for the project.

My motion today calls on the ACT government to not close this car park. Currently, this space contains 255 parking bays, of which there are four high demand disabled parks. During the day the car park is often at 100 per cent capacity, being primarily used by patients attending one of the many professional services on and near London Circuit. Solicitors, barristers and litigants also often use the car park to attend trials and to file documents in either the Supreme Court or Magistrates Court. Going into the evening, the car park is used by Canberrans heading to one of the many restaurants, bars, clubs and other hospitality facilities in the area.

The talk of closing down this car park came as a big surprise to many. This proposal had never been publicly canvassed before it was included in the EIS. Indeed there was no discussion of closing down any car park in the 158-page capital metro full business case—the document which was supposed to provide the government with all the information as to whether they should proceed with light rail or not. The Minister for Capital Metro also never made public comments about closing this car park prior to the publication of the EIS, or, indeed, any other car park, whether through the processes of the Assembly or through the media. Indeed, it would be very interesting to see whether the lost productivity which will arise as a result of losing this car park and the 255 parking spaces has been included in the BCR which has been generated for the government's light rail project.

Unsurprisingly, many businesses in this area have strongly objected to the ACT government's plan to close this car park. Of the 59 submissions received by the government regarding the EIS, many took objection to the plan to close down the car park.

Much of the criticism of this proposal has come from health and medical practitioners operating near the facility. These practices are concerned that their patients will find it harder to access their treatment rooms. In their submission to the Environment and Planning Directorate, one practice estimates that 40 per cent of their patients have injuries or suffer from health conditions which mean they cannot walk, they require a wheelchair or are limited in the distance that they can walk. Another submission said:

Our patient demographic is unusual in that a very high proportion of our patients have chronic illnesses such as coronary heart disease, cancer, respiratory diseases, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis and chronic kidney disease. Many of these illnesses result in mobility impairment and since most patients either do not have access to public transport or are not fit enough to use it, availability of parking close to the Practice is very important to them.

Clients of these practices have also raised strong objections. In another submission a patient of Canberra City Osteopathy said:

I have chronic back, neck and shoulder problems. Over 20 years I have found that regular osteopathy treatment helps, whereas nothing else does.

I work full time and am a taxpayer. The only way I can attend Canberra City Osteopathy is to drive to Civic. While working full time I simply cannot park further away or get public transport, because both methods would simply eat up time that belongs to my employer.

I can only imagine that I will have to start working part time so that I can actually get to my osteopathy appointments.

Another patient wrote:

I regularly attend sessions at an osteopathy clinic on London Circuit in order to remediate injuries sustained in an accident last year. My mobility is ok, but not always perfect, and I'm often in pain. I need to park close to the clinic, so the London Circuit car park is perfect for my needs.

Outside these medical and health practitioners, many restaurants, bars and clubs rely on these parking spaces to encourage Canberrans to visit their respective venues. Once this car park is closed, if light rail goes ahead and Canberrans begin parking elsewhere in the city, these venues are rightly concerned that this could lead to a significant loss of revenue. Ultimately, this leads to the possibility of businesses limiting their trading hours or, worse still, closing their doors altogether. A submission sent to the ACT government reads:

I have customers who already find it difficult to park on this side of the city, and if the project goes ahead, those customers could easily consider other areas to eat and visit where they know parking will be easily found.

These views are echoed by both Canberra CBD Ltd and the Property Council, who both warn that approximately 500 businesses and 3,500 employees will be affected by closing down this car park. Of course, it is also important to remember that most of these restaurants, bars, clubs and other businesses have already been impacted by the ACT government's decision to extend the hours of pay parking. The government's commercial rates have also been increasing year on year, meaning most of those businesses which thrive on an active nightlife have been hit by the triple whammy of rates increases, parking charge increases and a reduction in parking. It is no wonder that landlords and tenants are concerned that their businesses might not be viable heading into the future.

From these responses, it is clear that the ACT government's decision to close this car park will have an adverse impact on the patients who regularly use the Melbourne Building car park to access their medical or health professionals. More tellingly, at no point in the EIS is it considered what business impacts will be expected to flow from this decision. For example, there is seemingly no consideration of the health and medical services along London Circuit and the fact that patients of these practices need close and accessible parking. Were the authors of the EIS even aware that the ACT government was planning to extend the hours of pay parking in the last budget? Or is it like so many other government decisions—they are all done in isolation and never actually treated as an entire policy suite?

The EIS indicates that other parking options are available for those who would utilise the Melbourne Building car park. They include nearby privately operated car parks, as well as the parking spaces at the Canberra Centre. So the government's response is that people who would otherwise park in the Melbourne Building car park should park perhaps 750 metres or a kilometre away at the Canberra Centre. It is no wonder that so many concerned businesses have expressed their views on this issue. It is simply not feasible for many, given their health and other conditions, to walk that far. In response to the EIS a general practitioner wrote:

To suggest that business employees and, in particular, customers park in Marcus Clarke Street, City West Car Park or Canberra Centre is unacceptable and inconsiderate. Many customers and clients are elderly and to force them to walk a fair distance and at night to obtain a car park will only cause them to go elsewhere leaving my tenants with lost patronage and the prospect of possibly having to close their business.

A look at the EIS also indicates that every car park on the inside of London Circuit is already at capacity during business hours. The closest accessible car park not currently at capacity is the City West car park on Marcus Clarke Street. Even so, this car park is currently at 80 per cent and has only approximately 150 car parking spaces. Remaining parking options then include areas at the ANU, elsewhere along Marcus Clarke Street, the north and south car parks on Constitution Avenue and Corranderrk Street, and the city centre. In my opinion none of these car park options are comparable to the existing parking arrangements near the courts and across the road from the Melbourne Building for people who need to visit that precinct.

What is also frustrating to business owners is the lack of consultation. As I mentioned earlier, the government had minimal, if any, consultation with affected businesses prior to the release of the EIS. One business owner wrote this in his submission to the government:

The first notice we received of these proposed plans was a story run in the news. Your report suggest that local business will be consulted with regards to these issues however, up until this point in time, we have received no contact from the ACT Government regarding proposals and we are very aware that other small businesses in the area relying on this parking for their trade, have also not been consulted.

Worryingly as well for businesses is that there are no alternative sites proposed in the EIS. The Minister for Capital Metro has not offered a new location and has also recently said that consultations will need to take place with the winning consortium. However, given the minister's absolute desire to begin this project before Canberrans can have their say at the next election, I do not expect him to stand up to the winning consortium and stop the closure of this car park.

This government is intent on committing Canberrans to light rail before next year's election. The Canberra Liberals will of course do all we can to prevent this government from making yet another reckless decision regarding this \$783 million project. We simply do not think it is sensible at this time to spend so much money on a project that will only serve one per cent of Canberra's population in peak hour.

The government claims they have a mandate to go ahead with light rail, but they cannot claim a mandate to close down two car parks. Where was that in the \$30 million policy which the Labor Party took to the last election? They cannot have a mandate to make it harder for people to visit their health or medical professionals, and they cannot have a mandate to hurt already struggling businesses that have been hit with rates, increased parking charges and now decreased availability of parking. In fact, one submission sums up what many feel about this government's plans. It reads:

I hope this is not a *fait accompli*. Rather, I urge the ACT Government to look at alternatives so that the negative impacts on members of the public and on local businesses which would result from the current proposals are not implemented.

On this issue the community has clearly spoken. I ask the government to not close down this car park. I urge members to support this motion, and I ask the government to show some leadership and some respect for the community and to not go ahead with this proposal.

**MR CORBELL** (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro) (5.43): I take the opportunity this evening to talk about the purpose of preparing the environmental impact statement for the capital metro project and to reiterate the government's commitment to engaging with the community. The government is committed to being open and transparent and to engage with the community about the light rail project at every opportunity. In line with this commitment, the Capital Metro Agency has already facilitated a number of formal consultation programs, including seeking feedback on the early designs for capital metro stage 1 in the middle of last year, followed by consultation in January-February this year on the urban design concepts.

The CMA has also participated in and will continue to participate in numerous community events, such as the Celebrate Gungahlin festival and the successful community program, party at the shops, which is rolled out to local shopping centres right across Canberra. Participation in these types of consultation activities has been high with a large number of people in our community keen to learn more about the project and get involved. The early design and urban design consultation programs collectively resulted in over 29,000 interactions with the local community and key stakeholders.

On 20 June this year the draft environmental impact statement for capital metro was released, and this marks another important milestone in the planning and delivery of the project. This provided a further opportunity for people in Canberra to engage. For members who may not fully understand, an EIS is an analysis of the maximum potential impact of a proposed activity on the environment, both natural and physical. It describes all the possible impacts and identifies ways to avoid or minimise them. The draft EIS for capital metro stage 1 is a comprehensive document that covers a broad range of issues—everything from biodiversity, landscaping and greenhouse gas emissions to the design of substations, traffic management and control measures for noise and vibration levels.

Development of the draft EIS has helped us to explore all potential impacts before the project starts to make sure we can prevent or minimise them through a range of effective mitigation measures. The draft EIS also identifies benefits and opportunities that will be delivered as a result of the project. The benefit of releasing the draft EIS for capital metro—I emphasise the word “draft”—is that it provides the community with information on the potential impacts of constructing and operating the light rail and allows them to give their feedback. Consultation on the draft has taken our conversation with the community to the next level. In particular, it has enabled discussions with key stakeholders about what could be expected during construction and operation of the light rail service and what mitigation measures are needed to minimise these impacts, ensuring a better outcome for all involved. It has also given the community an opportunity to identify the issues that most concern them.

As members may be aware, the draft EIS is 1,800 pages long. To help encourage and facilitate discussion and help make technical content more easily understood, the Capital Metro Agency has hosted a number of drop-in information sessions in Gungahlin and Dickson for interested people to gather information and talk to the project team. The CMA has also hosted two Facebook fora dedicated to receiving and answering questions from the community about the draft EIS. The drop-in information sessions and Facebook fora were conducted to support the legislative requirement of publicly notifying the EIS on the government’s planning website. The online fora, in particular, have proved to be a highly successful way of engaging with the community, and they will be used again.

Capital metro is a significant project for Canberra, and in recognition of this, it is necessary to ensure the community is fully informed of how it is progressing. Following four weeks of consultation, the government received 59 submissions to the draft EIS from individuals, local businesses and community organisations. All of this feedback will be used to inform the ongoing planning for capital metro stage 1 as well as ensuring that the final EIS is a comprehensive document that thoroughly considers potential issues and mitigation measures for the project.

Some of the key issues raised during consultation include construction impacts such as noise; vibration and dust; traffic management; relocation of utilities; landscaping, including the potential conflict between trees and overhead wires; integration of light rail with other modes of transport; and access requirements to businesses and properties.

Construction of light rail will require the establishment of a number of temporary construction compounds. The site selection process for temporary construction compounds involves extensive consultation with the relevant ACT government agencies. The area, duration and location of construction compounds will not be confirmed until the preferred bidder has been engaged and their construction methodology and schedule is known. The London Circuit north-west car park, often referred to as the Magistrates Court car park, is one of the sites proposed as a temporary construction compound. The proposed closure of this car park for use as a site compound during construction was raised in response to the draft EIS and is a key concern for a number of businesses operating in the city.

Based on the feedback from community and local businesses, we recognise this is a busy and well-utilised car park and, should it be required for construction of light rail, the Capital Metro Agency will need to work with the successful bidder to minimise impacts as much as possible. It is important to reiterate this point: at this stage the Magistrates Court car park is proposed as a construction site compound, but this arrangement will not be able to be confirmed until the preferred bidder has been engaged and their construction methodology and schedule is known.

Having said that, the government is listening closely to the concerns being raised by the community, and we understand them. Prior to engaging the successful bidder, the Capital Metro Agency, the Land Development Agency and the Economic Development Directorate are all working together to explore sensible alternatives to the potential impact of lost parking spaces in the city. Possible solutions being explored include alternative locations for the depot, alternative new parking locations in the city, and exploring the feasibility of temporary parking structures.

This is an important issue and it is one the government is taking very seriously. With the formal consultation process of draft EIS now complete, capital metro is working through all comments received from the community and key stakeholders. The agency will address each issue raised in the final EIS and will lodge the document with the Environment and Planning Directorate later this year. But this is not the end of the conversation. Capital Metro has met with and will continue to meet with businesses, residents and stakeholders along the corridor to understand what is important to their local area, and we are doing this in two new exciting ways. The first of these is the place manager program which commenced in July.

This program involves the placement of dedicated Capital Metro staff, or place managers, at three locations along the corridor—Gungahlin, Dickson and Civic. By positioning Capital Metro staff in offices along the light rail alignment, businesses and the community will have convenient access to the project team to ask questions or work through potential concerns they may have. Our dedicated place managers are available every Wednesday and Thursday at set times for people to drop in and have a chat, or people can schedule an appointment with a place manager at a time that is more suitable to them.

Since the program commenced our place managers have also been proactive in making contact and meeting with local businesses along the corridor. Our place



managers have made a concerted effort to meet all EIS respondents in person, including, of course, the business proprietors within the Melbourne and Sydney buildings. During these interactions our place managers have provided detailed information about the EIS, listened to concerns and suggestions and reported this information back to the Capital Metro project team.

Our place managers realise the proposed temporary closure of the London Circuit car park presents a major concern for a number of these businesses. As such, our place managers will continue to liaise with those businesses to make sure they are kept informed. Capital Metro Agency's priority over the past fortnight has been to meet with all 59 EIS respondents, but we are also committed to conducting meaningful engagement with as many Canberrans as possible. Therefore, the place managers will continue their work by visiting residences, businesses and community groups from Civic through to Gungahlin and beyond

The second initiative is the establishment of business and community reference groups. Throughout July nominations were open for people interested in becoming a member of a community or business reference group for the light rail project. Establishment of the reference groups provides a great opportunity for community and business leaders along the light rail corridor to get involved with the project and provide feedback about the best way to deliver this vital project for Canberra.

The groups will work with the Capital Metro Agency and will act as a valuable forum for members to provide suggestions and ask questions on behalf of the people they represent. The CMA received an overwhelming response from people wishing to be involved, with more than 70 nominations received. The business and community reference groups will complement the place manager program. Part of the role of the place managers will be to work closely with and support each of these reference groups.

These two initiatives build on the extensive consultation activities undertaken by Capital Metro to date and demonstrate the government's commitment to keeping the community involved and updated every step of the way. As with any project of this size and scale, there will be some impacts and there will be some disruption. The government is not shying away from our responsibility to manage these impacts and disruptions, and we are committed to engaging with the Canberra community to ensure the impact is minimised as much as possible. This is a project not just about where we are now; it is about setting Canberra up for the future. Our population is growing, our roads are becoming more and more congested and our commute is getting longer. We simply cannot continue to follow business as usual. It is time to revitalise the corridor, to provide for enhanced development opportunities, to stimulate the economy and to create jobs for our local community. But most importantly, it is time to invest in Canberra's future.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I have circulated an amendment to Mr Coe's motion and I now move that amendment:

Omit all words after "That this Assembly", substitute:

- “(1) notes that, in relation to the Capital Metro draft EIS and proposed location of temporary construction compounds:
- (a) the Capital Metro draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released for public consultation from 21 June to 17 July 2015;
  - (b) the draft EIS identifies locations along the light rail corridor for proposed temporary construction compounds. One of these proposed sites is the Magistrates Court car park, opposite the Melbourne Building on London Circuit;
  - (c) contrary to claims made by the Opposition, the entire Magistrates Court car park may not be required for a compound and it is unlikely to be required during the entire construction program. The draft EIS has identified the greatest potential impact in order to sufficiently consider a ‘worst case scenario’;
  - (d) the final decision on whether or not the sites identified in the draft EIS will be used has not yet been made and shortlisted respondents may propose alternative solutions through the project’s bidding process;
  - (e) the Capital Metro Agency (CMA) is working closely with other Government agencies to identify alternative parking arrangements and locations in the city to reduce the impact should the Magistrates Court car park site be required for some of the project;
  - (f) the CMA is committed to working with stakeholders that may be impacted by the possible temporary closure of the Magistrates Court car park and has met with and will continue to meet with businesses, residents and key stakeholders along the route to understand what is important to the local area; and
  - (g) undertaking consultation on the draft EIS has provided an important opportunity for discussion with the community on what the possible impacts during construction and operation of light rail could be ahead of finalisation of the EIS; and
- (2) further, notes the ongoing consultation activities of the Government relating to the project including:
- (a) the Place Manager Program which commenced on 8 July 2015. Dedicated place managers are located in Civic and Gungahlin, giving residents and businesses convenient access to CMA staff to ask questions or discuss any concerns they may have about the project; and
  - (b) the formation of business and community reference groups. The reference groups will work with CMA and act as a valuable forum for members to provide suggestions and ask questions on behalf of the people they represent.”.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (5.55): I will not be supporting Mr Coe's motion. Like every one of the motions Mr Coe has presented on light rail, it is short sighted, motivated by political ends and ill-informed about the situation it purports to describe. To start with, Mr Coe's motion says the recent EIS proposes the closure of the London Circuit car park for the entirety of the four-year construction period. The trouble starts from the first line of the motion. The EIS is a draft EIS meaning, of course, that the construction compound sites are possibilities and are not finalised. Likewise, it is not proposed to close the car park for the entirety of the four-year construction period. Yes, there is a possibility that compounds will be needed for four years, but they may also only be needed for a shorter period. These are details that are not yet resolved.

The reality is that all these issues are still under consideration. A range of options are available in relation to construction compounds. Their final configuration will depend on final government decisions as well as the approach taken by the successful consortium. These decisions will, of course, be taken with input from the community. There will be mitigation measures. A variety of options are already being considered. If the London Circuit car park is used, for example, it may be that only some part of it is required. It may be that the project management compensates for lost car parking by providing some other car parking areas. A range of options are to be considered, and they will, of course, all be discussed with a range of stakeholders.

The point is that these decisions are not yet made and are still under active consideration. Mr Coe, in his excitement to throw mud at the light rail project, seems to have jumped ahead. It may be that the final decision is that the London Circuit car park is used as a temporary construction compound. That could be the case. Construction compounds are necessary to build big projects like light rail. Likewise, there will be other disruptions along the route including other compounds, construction work and inevitably some traffic disruptions. This will be minimised as much as possible. A great deal of work is going into the project, and this will increase manifold when the consortium comes on board. No doubt they will share the goal of minimising disruption.

It is easy for Mr Coe to oppose the creation of any construction compounds and to promise no disruptions to Canberra drivers because he says he would not build light rail. There would never be disruptions under this approach because we would not build any public transport infrastructure. That seems so easy, but there is something a little bit ugly about the approach of opposing a project in principle but then picking out each individual element of disruption and trying to make hay out of that.

We know perfectly well that if the Liberals wanted to build some big road, for example—and we know they do want to build a lot of big roads—they would support building construction compounds and would accept disruptions to commuters that come with that project. It is like how Mr Coe is suddenly in love with the trees on Northbourne Avenue but has never raised an issue with trees that are removed for any other development. It is all rather see-through. Even as he laments disruptions to

people in the city, Mr Coe forgets or his own myopic approach to transport and planning fails to address congestion or growth in Canberra. It is this approach that will condemn the Canberra community to an endless future of disruption.

The government, supported by the Greens, has a quality solution with its light rail project. It is a project for now and a project for the future. Under Mr Coe's approach—the oppose everything approach—what will happen to the already congested Northbourne Avenue? Imagine the irritation and inconvenience felt by the thousands of commuters in Mr Coe's dystopian future. They will struggle to get through the Northbourne Avenue gridlock. Where are we going to put the thousands of extra people and thousands of extra cars in the future as Canberra's population grows and the number of cars on the road increases? "Why didn't the government take any action 10 years ago," they will ask. "Sorry," the Canberra Liberals will say, "we decided no light rail was our campaign slogan back in 2016."

On this note, there is some irony to be found in the points of Mr Coe's motion. They talk about the potential loss of parking convenience.

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

**MR RATTENBURY:** The best way to remove convenience for the travelling public is to take no action on public transport, especially for people travelling to Civic. Rather than labour this point, I will instead offer the Assembly an update on some quality research that was recently undertaken by the Canberra Urban and Regional Futures group. In June this year they released their working paper entitled *Light Rail Transit and Residential City in Mid-size Cities*. It is a fascinating read and I recommend it to all members. It is fascinating in particular because it focuses on light rail in cities that are comparative to Canberra. It looks closely at the cities of Adelaide, Edmonton, Bergen and Freiburg, and each of these cities can be paralleled to Canberra in different ways.

One of its interesting findings is the way light rail has helped to create denser transport corridors in these cities. We hear people say that Canberra is not dense enough so we should not build light rail. But this report shows that light rail plays a valuable role in creating density. The report presents some key lessons for Canberra, which I will be utilising through my own role in this government. It says, for example, that a precinct strategy is necessary to ensure the best outcome in the light rail corridor. Similarly, adopting transit-oriented development guidelines is an important factor.

Interestingly, the success of light rail has helped change community attitudes towards the urban challenge of car dependence in some of the case study cities. The communities now have a better and shared understanding of city building and of future-proofing the city against planning challenges. Also interesting is the report's finding that community confidence increases as new stages of light rail are planned and delivered. There are several other valuable lessons in this report as well. Once again, I suggest that members who have not read the report may find it interesting.

To conclude, I will not be supporting the motion today. As a member of the government I am committed to implementing the light project in a consultative and fair way and minimising disruptions as much as possible. In light of that, I will be supporting the amendment put forward by Mr Corbell, which sets out a number of the points I have spoken to today about things such as the EIS being a draft and it being a point of public consultation and the commitment from the Capital Metro Agency to working with stakeholders to deal with a range of the issues that are coming forward. Mr Corbell spoke to this today—things like the place manager program are very beneficial in enabling this sort of ongoing discussion to happen. Ongoing discussion will be needed; there will be things we need to work through. But the answer is in working through them and not taking an approach that simply says, “It’s too hard. We’re not even going to try.”

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Roads and Parking, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (6.03): I thank Mr Coe for his motion on the capital metro project. I take this opportunity to talk about the draft environmental impact statement as well as the wider environmental benefits that will be achieved for Canberra through this transformative infrastructure project, a critical part of building an integrated transport network for our city. As Minister Corbell has already explained, the purpose of preparing an EIS is to identify and analyse the maximum potential impact a project will have on the environment, both physical and natural. This analysis also provides an opportunity to identify mitigation measures so that the impact can be minimised and in many cases avoided altogether.

The draft EIS for capital metro stage 1 is a comprehensive document. It covers a broad range of topics including biodiversity and heritage, noise and vibration, landscaping, traffic and transport, air quality and greenhouse gases, utilities and services and other construction related impacts.

The ACT government places high priority on communicating and engaging with the community. Release of the draft EIS for capital metro stage 1 has allowed the government to continue an open and transparent conversation on the planning and delivery of the light rail project. Involving the community in the discussion around what impacts occur as a result of light rail is integral to ensuring all impacts, mitigation measures and project benefits have been identified. Releasing the draft EIS is not intended to alarm people but to ensure they are fully informed. We want the community to be involved in the project and give them the opportunity to help identify the issues, the likely impact of those issues and the best way to mitigate them.

When we talk about the potential environmental impacts of constructing and operating the light rail it is important to remember what environmental benefits will be achieved through this project as well. Capital metro is an important project for the future of Canberra that will deliver a sustainable city with better transport, better use of land and better outcomes for community health and the environment.

What challenges need to be addressed to ensure we can remain one of the most livable cities in the world? Canberra is a growing city. In the past hundred years we have

grown from fewer than a thousand people to where we are approaching 400,000 people now. By 2050 there will be well over half a million people in our nation's capital.

The ACT government's investment in light rail is part of a broader strategic approach to reshape the way Canberra grows to ensure we develop a more compact and sustainable city. We need to reduce our high car dependency to ensure that we do not fall into the congestion trap experienced by other cities—congestion that is already costing Canberra \$200 million a year. As our city continues to grow, our dependence on the car is leading to increasing congestion, also loss of productivity, reduced air quality and associated health impacts, noise pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The realisation of these impacts is leading us to rethink priorities and see the benefits of a well-integrated public transport network.

Canberra has the highest car dependence of any major Australian city, with transport now being responsible for 25 per cent of the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions. These figures will continue to grow, harming the environment and our health if we do not act now. And while we will continue to invest in our road network across the city, it is important to remember that we need to look at more sustainable solutions if we want to improve the livability of our city.

As with many cities around the world, Canberra's population growth and car dependence have led to a city of low density urban sprawl. Urban sprawl is unsustainable and outdated. These areas cost more to develop as they require large expanses of roads, water and sewerage, and other government services are needed to serve fewer people over a larger area. There is substantial evidence linking urban sprawl to adverse environmental impacts. Urban sprawl changes land use and contributes to reduced biodiversity through loss of native vegetation and the impact on natural habitats for wildlife.

As the territory begins to run out of developable land within our constrained borders it makes sense to look at how we can maximise the use of already developed urban areas. In fact, during my recent consultation on the development of a statement of planning intent it was clearly communicated to me that there is a strong desire in the community to limit this sprawl and see higher density development and adaptive reuse of existing sites and infrastructure in the city centre, town and group centres and that they be developed with good connections to public transport.

Investment in light rail as part of a broader transport network is logical as it is a proven technology that can shape effective and well-functioning cities. Light rail can stimulate urban renewal, encourage smarter, denser development in the city and support the ACT's strategy of increasing housing density along transport corridors. The capital metro project will encourage urban intensification, allowing our city to infill and encourage smart, future investment along the light rail corridor.

Capital metro stage 1 from the city to Gungahlin will play a significant role in supporting changed settlement patterns and transit-oriented development. A study by Curtin University found that on average urban infill development costs \$300 million less than urban sprawl per 1,000 dwellings. What this means is that urban infill can cost up to 130 per cent less than greenfield development.

Light rail will also help get people out of their cars and onto public transport. It will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, congestion and travel times and be beneficial for the environment and also the health of our community. Incorporating exercise in our daily commute is proven to be highly effective in increasing physical activity which in turn can help us maintain better health. One of the many health benefits associated with light rail is that it will provide better connectivity and accessibility to the city, promoting active transport and decreasing the time people spend in their cars.

Light rail stops will be easily accessible and within walking distances of key populated areas, and those are predicted to increase in population in the future. Research indicates that people are prepared to walk up to one kilometre for light rail, a much higher distance than for buses. By walking to a light rail stop to get from home to work or school and back again, a person could complete up to an extra three kilometres of walking per day compared to driving. Capital metro is about creating a more sustainable Canberra, and we are about making sure that environment and sustainability are at the heart of that approach.

To ensure the best environmental outcomes are achieved as part of the project the successful bidder will be required to source at minimum 10 per cent of the light rail system's electricity usage from renewable energy sources such as solar or wind. This combined with the ACT government's target of 90 per cent renewable energy by 2020, at the time in which stage 1 light rail will be up and running, will enable the capital metro project to be 100 per cent green energy powered.

In addition to ensuring the system runs on 100 per cent renewable energy the successful bidder will also need to have measures in place to reduce the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from construction activity. This will include avoiding and reducing emissions through energy efficient construction practices such as sourcing carbon offsets by investing in programs such as the reforestation or renewable energy initiatives. These two project requirements demonstrate the ACT government's leadership in tackling the impacts of climate change through prioritisation of renewable energy, reducing the ACT's carbon emissions, and a strong commitment to achieving carbon neutrality.

Light rail is part of the vision for a truly sustainable Canberra along with renewable energy and urban renewal. Capital metro stage 1 will deliver almost \$1 billion worth of benefits for our community. As we progress through the planning phases of the capital metro project and as we continue to engage with the community to work through potential impacts as identified in the draft EIS, I would like you all to keep in mind the long-term vision for Canberra. By building a truly integrated transport network we will enable people to use a combination of bus, light rail, active travel options like cycling and walking, together with a continued investment in our road network and effective parking strategies. The government will deliver a network that will ensure Canberrans are well connected to their local community and their city.

**MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.13):** Speaking to the amendment and to conclude debate on the motion, I am not at all surprised by the arguments we have heard from those opposite. We simply get told time and time again to have this blind faith in this

project. Despite all the obstacles, despite all the problems that have arisen over the last few years with regard to this project, we should still have faith, despite the fact that the patronage figures do not stack up, despite the fact that the construction program does not stack up, despite the fact that the financials do not stack up, despite the fact that it was going to be \$614 million with contingency and is now \$783 million and on the up, perhaps as high as \$900 million if you go by what the government has said in correspondence to Chinese investors.

There are serious concerns with this project. Not the least of these is, of course, the impact during the construction period. It is all very well for the government to tout the \$950 million-odd of benefits that this project is supposedly going to bring the territory but have they factored in the loss of economic activity as a result of taking away 255 car parks in the city? Have they factored in the closure of businesses because their customers cannot walk through the door because they have to park a kilometre away? Have they factored in the many detrimental impacts that will come about as a result of job losses in those businesses because they simply cannot attract customers to walk through the door? There are so many problems with this project.

At every single hurdle the government just says, "Don't worry, it'll be fine." The truth is that neither we nor the community at large has confidence in this government to deliver this project. They have got poor form when it comes to delivering capital works projects around town. Whether it is the GDE, whether it is Tharwa bridge or numerous other projects around town, this government has a terrible track record. Now we are told to trust them—\$783 million, they can deliver it on time and on budget. We simply do not buy that.

But if you look at the figures that the government touts about this project, 15,000 people they hope to attract onto light rail in 2021. On their own figures, 10 years later, it is 20,000 people. From 15,000 in 2021 to 20,000 in 2031 is an increase of just 30 per cent over the course of 10 years. Mr Rattenbury says, "Don't worry, we need to start now so that we can have increased density." In 10 years time it is only going to increase from 15,000 to 20,000 in a city that will have a population of nearly 500,000 at the time.

In a city of 500,000 or 450,000, in 2031 20,000 people will depend on light rail each day. That is simply because they axed the buses, simply because they axed the best bus in the network, the route 200. Someone can get one bus from Amaroo to Barton—perhaps they work at DFAT and live in Amaroo—at the moment. Under light rail, they will get a bus to Gungahlin, a tram to the city and then a bus to Barton.

It is for that reason that I firmly believe that light rail will see a decrease in the number of public transport users in Gungahlin, not an increase. At present there are many, many suburbs—in fact, every suburb but Crace—where you can get a single bus into the city, then on to Russell and then to the parliamentary triangle. Under light rail, no suburb in Gungahlin will have a bus to the city.

These are very serious issues, and it seems that the government just glosses over them. Sometimes I ponder whether the government is actually committed to light rail. I wonder whether maybe they will just drag it on until after the election and then hope they win with a majority, they can drop Mr Rattenbury and then they can say, "It's all



too hard. It's all too expensive. Maybe in 10 or 20 years time we'll think about it." But even if that does happen, even in the event that they win the election and they have a majority, they still will have squandered perhaps \$100 million on this project. We know they have already spent upwards of \$30 million or \$40 million on this project with next to nothing in return. It is important to note that the \$30 million or \$40 million they have spent and the \$50 million they have appropriated for the Capital Metro Agency is in addition to the \$783 million construction cost which the consortia will benefit from.

I imagine there are tram manufacturers in Europe and consultants in North America that are licking their lips at the prospect of this government signing up to light rail with one of the consortia, because a huge amount of money which is collected by the government and charged through rates, fees, charges, taxes, will be going offshore to prop up an international company to deliver light rail to a city in which much more than 90 per cent will not use it. Somehow this is a good project! Somehow this stacks up!

The opposition will continue to do all we can to scrutinise this project. That is why we happily stand alongside the small business people in the city who will feel the full brunt of this government's policy when it comes to closing car parks and taking away 255 spots in the city. That will have a devastating impact on many, many businesses.

I do not hold out too much hope that this motion will get up but, you never know, there could be a miracle. I think it is important that we put on the record today and in the future the very real concerns that Canberrans have with this disastrous project.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6		Noes 5	
Mr Barr	Mr Corbell	Mr Coe	Mr Hanson
Dr Bourke	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Dunne	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Question put:

That the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 6		Noes 5	
Mr Barr	Mr Corbell	Mr Coe	Mr Hanson
Dr Bourke	Mr Gentleman	Mr Doszpot	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Dunne	

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

## Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## Health—arts in health program

**DR BOURKE** (Ginninderra) (6.25): I want to congratulate all involved in a wonderful program in the health department. I warn some in this place who seem to be allergic to it that I am going to use the “A” word—arts. The Health Directorate’s arts in health program organises the commissioning and installation of artworks in new health infrastructure projects. It is recognition of the beneficial effects of arts on wellbeing and the human soul. In what we hope is a sterile environment biologically, this program aims to create a fertile and enriching environment for the imagination of clients at our health facilities. In the last financial year the program acquired artworks for the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, the Canberra Region Cancer Centre and the new and refurbished community health centres.

I recently had the pleasure of being at the unveiling of a wonderful collaboration between the arts in health program, the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, artist Bruce Whatley and author Jackie French. Bruce Whatley is a highly regarded and talented author and illustrator for children both in Australia and internationally, and well-known Canberra region writer Jackie French is Australian Children’s Laureate for 2014-15 and Senior Australian of the Year for 2015, and she was previously on the board of the Canberra Hospital.

Jackie’s writing is familiar to many in Canberra, including her frequent mentions of the lives of the wombats who regard her garden as their own. *Wombat Diary* and *Baby Wombat’s Week* are particularly popular children’s books written by Jackie and illustrated by Bruce Whatley. Bruce has specially repainted beautiful images from *Baby Wombat’s Week* for the walls of the hospital’s neonatal intensive care unit ward. The larger than life paintings brighten the lives of the families using the unit at what can be a very difficult time.

Centenary hospital’s neonatal intensive care unit was recently described by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards surveyor Christine Best as the best NICU in the world in her summation speech during the accreditation survey of ACT Health in May. The NICU and special care unit also won the ACT 2015 nursing team excellence award for family integrated care. This was for integrating families into the care of their premature newborns through a greater emphasis on parental education, involving parents in ward rounds, emotional support and the physical environment.

This concern for family integrated care and emotional support encouraged NICU to include art as a strategy to support parents during their stay. The brief was to create a nursery atmosphere that was nurturing and embodied themes of love, care, cuddles, quiet, reassurance and building positive memories. The images from *Baby Wombat’s*

*Week* are perfect for the unit. I thank HarperCollins, Jackie and Bruce, who generously gave permission to use the painting, and I thank Bruce who kindly repainted enlarged versions of the paintings to fit the walls to help make NICU the welcoming place it is today. I also thank Costco who, through the newborn November appeal in conjunction with the Canberra Hospital Foundation, helped with the fabrication to mount the pictures.

## **OzHarvest**

**MR SMYTH** (Brindabella) (6.28): For those that cannot remember, last Monday, 27 July was the sort of balmy, beautiful Canberra winter day which we all love, because there was no rain, there was no snow, there was no wind; there was just lovely sunshine. A number of us from the Assembly wandered over to Petrie Plaza just down from the merry-go-round for a TES event, which is a think, eat and save event. These events were held concurrently in all major cities and some towns across the nation and, I understand, across the world. TES is held each year in partnership with the UNEP and the FAO organisations of the United Nations. They are conducted to show that rescued food can be very edible and very tasty, and that there is still a lot of work to be done.

On behalf of OzHarvest, I said if they gave me some stats I would be delighted to speak here today. Dave Burnett has provided the following:

As it turns out we had a great day and the assembled students, volunteers and supporters dished out 200 litres of various soups. At least 95 per cent of the soup was produced from rescued food and the bread rolls were made by IHG from rescued bags of flour.

Next year they hope to be even bigger and better. There were 40 students volunteering on the day—20 from Radford, 20 from Eddies—and they also cooked soup in the college kitchens leading up to the event. I can testify that both the chicken and sweetcorn and the potato and leek soup were very nice. There was some eastern European soup. There was a bit of cabbage out there to be had. So there was plenty of variety for all involved. Dave continued:

OzHarvest Canberra has an active partnership with both colleges. We do a weekly delivery of rescued food which students whip up into lovely meals and treats which we collect and deliver to local charities at the end of the week.

It is pretty much part of their curriculum now, so well done to both Radford and Eddies. Some private sector people were involved. The National Convention Centre, Parliament House and the Crowne Plaza all threw their support behind the event and cooked breads made from rescued ingredients. They were also on hand at the event to help out and to lend some wisdom to the students.

On behalf of OzHarvest, thanks to all those who turned up and came along. For those who do not know, OzHarvest in the year to date has collected 110,000 kilos of food and redistributed it, which is pretty amazing. So well done to all of them, and particularly the leadership of Dave Burnett and the support that he gets from Communities@Work. They are a couple of great organisations doing a great job for those less well off in our community.

**RSPCA  
Ginninderra electorate  
Diamantina Scout Group**

**MRS DUNNE** (Ginninderra) (6.31): On 27 July I hosted a reception for board members and volunteers of the RSPCA in the Speaker's hospitality room. Guests toured the Assembly, led by our very capable education officer, Neal Baudinette, and then joined me, along with my colleagues Ms Lawder and Mr Doszpot, for an informal reception. The RSPCA was represented by CEO Tammy Ven Dange along with Louise Douglas, Michael Sassella, Catherine Croatto, Christine Marimon, Melissa Smith, Lilian Wong, Naomi Dempsey, Josh Pickham, Leisa Quin, Jessica Robbie, Emma Ford, Stan Rinaldi, Pearl Moyseyenko, Belinda Lowrey and Rhiannon Hinds.

In conversation, representatives of the RSPCA raised a number of issues, including what they consider to be inadequate sentences for people convicted of serious animal abuse. A Change.org petition calling for tougher sentences for people convicted of animal abuse or violence received several thousand signatures early this month. These are encouraging signs. As recently as last week the Magistrates Court handed down a sentence for animal cruelty that Ms Ven Dange commented on in the media by saying:

We are pleased to see for the first time that a magistrate has handed down a reasonable punishment for an act of cruelty against an animal.

On 21 July, I spoke at the Belconnen Community Council about "The people of Belconnen: their frustrations, needs and vision". I spoke of the issues that constituents often raise with me, such as hefty rate increases over the past four years, the failure of the ACT government to provide an appropriate level of services to match the rates paid, and the proposed light rail scheme between Gungahlin and the city. I also advised that the Canberra Liberals will be releasing policies over the next year advising how we could do things differently from the current government. As well, I spoke about the role of the Speaker in the Assembly and the work of the Assembly in our community. I encouraged council members to visit their Assembly, to see the Assembly in session and to visit their local members.

I understand that other members for Ginninderra will be invited to speak with the Belconnen Community Council in the coming months. I thank the chairperson of the Belconnen Community Council, Tara Cheyne, and committee member Damien Haas, who extended the invitation.

In November 2010, vandals burnt down the Diamantina Scout Group hall in Kaleen. In the years since then, the Diamantina Scout Group has been working long and hard to cover the gap between the insurance payout and the cost of building a new hall. Recently the Rotary Club of Belconnen made a generous donation of \$25,000 from the Jamison trash and treasure markets to allow a contract to be signed and reconstruction to commence. This is a truly magnificent gesture from Belconnen Rotary, and it is great to see the funds raised from our now legendary trash and

treasure markets continuing to be put back into the community in such a positive way. I want to thank the Belconnen Rotary Club, and I wish the Diamantina Scout Group every success in their exciting rebuilding project. It augurs well for the future of scouting in the area.

### **Special Olympics**

**MR RATTENBURY** (Molonglo) (6.34): Two weeks ago I was pleased to meet the ACT athletes who represented Australia at the Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles as they left Canberra Airport on their big adventure. The seven Canberrans joined 69 other Australians and another 7,000 athletes from 177 countries competing in the event, which was held from 25 July to 2 August. The games have now officially come to an end, and all but one of our athletes are arriving home today.

The Special Olympics aims to provide meaningful sports programs for people with an intellectual disability so they can have the chance to do their best in an environment where they are accepted and can feel proud of their achievements. Through being involved in sport, they have a chance to learn new skills and have experiences that help improve their health, develop self-confidence, have fun and build social connections. For a group within the community that is traditionally quite socially isolated, it is the personal connections and friendships that come from being part of the Special Olympics that have the biggest impact on the day-to-day lives of the participants and their families.

From the photos posted on social media from the games, it is very clear that the athletes have clearly had a wonderful time enjoying what has been a terrific event, and are overjoyed to have had the opportunity to represent their country, compete with their peers, and build new friendships. The camaraderie amongst the teams has been strong, with some great displays of sportsmanship from athletes showing the joy of competing, the love of sport and a great spirit of friendship amongst the competitors.

The Canberra athletes represented Australia in five sports—basketball, football, golf, sailing and swimming. In basketball, Canberra's Jack Lyttleton was part of the gold medal winning team that competed against Jamaica in the final on Sunday. In football, Liam O'Donnell and Zachary Spoor were part of the team that won silver in the five-a-side football. Liam was selected to run with the Olympic torch here in Australia in the lead-up to the games and has become somewhat of a celebrity, picking up the nickname "Hollywood" because of the media coverage attracted while representing Australia at the Asia Pacific Games in 2013. In golf, Darren Tait won silver in the level 4 stroke play nine hole. In sailing, Bronwyn Ibbotsen and Allister Peak picked up the top two places, with Allister winning gold and Bronwyn winning silver in the level 5 individual sailing. In swimming, Gabrielle Dear competed in the 100-metre freestyle and 50-metre backstroke, coming fourth in that event, and eighth in the freestyle. The ACT should be very proud of these seven athletes for their achievements in their chosen events and for the great spirit of sportsmanship which they displayed.

The ACT government is a proud supporter of Special Olympics ACT. Triennial funding is currently provided to support the organisation's operation—in the order of \$17,000 per annum, with a total of \$42,000 since 2013. In addition, the territory has provided guidance and further funding to assist Special Olympics ACT to enhance its gymnastics, swimming and cricket programs, to give opportunities to existing athletes, and to attract new participants to the Special Olympics movement. Importantly, Sport and Recreation Services has assisted Special Olympics ACT to develop partnerships within the sports sector to help them with the delivery of their programs.

I would like to congratulate our seven athletes. It was great chatting to them at the airport as they went about pulling on the green and gold uniform and talking about their aspirations for the games. I am pleased to hear that they have not only done very well but also had a great time. I would also like to thank the supporters who made it possible for them to go. There are many people behind those athletes getting to those games, and it is important that we acknowledge them as well.

### **Gungahlin United Football Club**

**MR COE** (Ginninderra) (6.38): I rise tonight to talk about the Gungahlin United Football Club. The club was formed in 1997 to provide a local football club for the expanding Gungahlin area. For almost 20 years the club has provided an avenue for junior and senior footballers in the Gungahlin area to play football. This year Gungahlin united has gone from strength to strength. In January the club successfully entered the National Premier League, the highest level of competition for both men's and women's football in the territory. In their first season the men's team currently sit sixth, while the women's team is sitting in second place.

In June Gungahlin united also won the right to represent the territory in the FFA Cup, the Australian version of the English FA Cup, a knockout competition which pits professional clubs and semi-professional clubs against each other. The club claimed this spot by winning the Federation Cup final over Belconnen United thanks to an extra-time goal from Daniel Barac.

Last month Gungahlin was drawn to play Sydney Olympic in the FFA Cup's round of 32. Unfortunately last night the result did not go Gungahlin's way, with a strike from Sydney Olympic sealing a 1-0 victory for the visitors very late into the match. However, Gungahlin certainly were not outplayed and were very competitive throughout the entire match, which shows good signs to come. It certainly showed that the level of football in Canberra is high, and that clubs from Canberra can match it with the best from Sydney. There was a great crowd of I believe almost 2,000 people that went out to support the teams, albeit in near freezing conditions.

I extend my congratulations to Gungahlin united head coach, Mitch Stevens, the technical director, Claudio Canosa, and all the players on a fantastic effort last night. They gave it their all and were ultimately unlucky to not walk away with the victory and go through to the next round.

I also congratulate all those involved at the club. The club has taken a big step this year in entering both the men's and women's premier league and has now gained national exposure with their entry into the FFA Cup. With this in mind, I thank and note the club's executive committee comprised of the president, Ricardo Alberto; the vice president community, Andrew Preston; the technical director, Claudio Canosa; the secretary, Brad Doohan, who also doubles as the men's state league and masters coordinator; the treasurer, Alex Alberto; the registrar, Jenner Rolfe; the club coach coordinator, Steve Ujdur; the under-5s to under-9s coach, Jon Cooper; the under-15s to under-17s coach, Regan Walsh; and the club community coach, girls, Diego Iglesias.

I also acknowledge the other officials at the club, including the referee coordinator, Cameron Shelton; the child welfare officer, Bill Napier; the volunteer coordinator, Melissa Preston; the under-10s to under-14s coach, Steve Gibbs; the property managers, Steve Welsh and Bill Napier; the grounds coordinator, Usha Najdu; the women's state league coordinator, Chris Granger; the premier league men's coach, Mitch Stevens; and the premier league women's coach, Paolo Romero.

I wish all the players, staff and volunteers at Gungahlin united all the best for the rest of the season. For more information on the club, I encourage all members to visit their website at [www.gungahlinunitedfc.org.au](http://www.gungahlinunitedfc.org.au).

### **Communities@Work**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.41): I was pleased to attend the turning of the sod for Communities@Work's new community facility in Holder on 24 July 2015. The sod turning was done by Senator Zed Seselja. I note my colleague Brendan Smyth was also at the turning of the sod. I thank Communities@Work for inviting me and to Paul House for a traditional welcome. It was a rainy and cold afternoon, but that did little to dampen the enthusiasm of those present for the start of this important project. It had been a goal of Communities@Work to build its own purpose-built facility for many years. The central location of its new community facility on Dixon Drive in Holder will complement Communities@Work's established hubs in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin.

I was pleased to learn that once phase one of the new community facility is built, Communities@Work will be able to deliver a wide range of services, including its lifestyle services, which encompass services for seniors and people with a disability either in centre, in home or in community. Communities@Work will also be able to deliver its social programs, which include essential services to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our community. Through delivery of these services, Communities@Work will continue to make an outstanding contribution to our community.

Communities@Work run a number of other programs, including Galilee School for students who may have disengaged from traditional schooling. It was my pleasure to meet some of the students from Galilee School at the sod turning and learn about their plans for the future.

Communities@Work have almost 40 years of experience in their various guises through their iteration, so they have a long track record in providing services to Canberrans in need. I would like to congratulate Lynne Harwood, the CEO, Archie Tsirimokos, the chair of the board, and all other staff and board members. I also make a special mention of Lee Maiden, the executive director, and Deirdre Brown, director of Galilee School. Also, a big thank you to past board members, as this project has been a long time in the planning. I look forward to seeing Communities@Work continue to make a big difference in our region. You can find out more at [www.commsatwork.org](http://www.commsatwork.org).

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.44 pm.**