



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

EIGHTH ASSEMBLY

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Tuesday, 15 September 2015

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

Petitions

Ministerial responses

Clerk: The following responses to petitions have been lodged by ministers:

By **Mr Barr**, Minister for Urban Renewal, dated 10 September 2015, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Doszpot on 2 June 2015 concerning Telopea Park School playing fields land swap.

By **Mr Barr**, Minister for Urban Renewal, dated 2 September 2015, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Doszpot on 3 June 2015 concerning redevelopment of the Campbell service station site.

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

Schools—Telopea Park—petition No 6-15

The response read as follows:

The Canberra Services Club, which is adjacent to Manuka Oval (Block 1, Section 15 Griffith), burned down in 2011. Since this time, the ACT Government has been working with the Club to find a suitable location for the club to rebuild.

The Canberra Services Club has entered into a partnership with the Canberra Club and a Memorandum of Understanding with Defence Housing Australia (DHA) to develop a mixed use precinct that would include the Club, other commercial development and residential development.

The Land Development Agency (LDA) identified Block 2 and 5, Section 41 Griffith, part of which currently houses a building rented by the Manuka Occasional Childcare Association (MOCCA), as a suitable location for the new Services Club development. The land is owned by the ACT Government and the childcare centre currently pays a peppercorn rent of five (5) cents a year. The site is ideal for a mixed use development which would add to the commercial centre of Manuka.

MOCCA was informed by the Education and Training Directorate (ETD) in September 2014 that, in order to facilitate the proposal, they would need to relocate and that a new site would be identified for them. The LDA identified the tennis courts on Montgomery Oval as the most suitable site near to Manuka. At the time, MOCCA welcomed the site and indicated they were comfortable with the location.

Montgomery Oval is owned by the ACT Government, and Telopea Park School currently uses the site for sporting lessons. ETD agreed to its transfer to the LDA on 28 January 2015, and the school was informed on 17 February 2015. MOCCA was informed of the new site in February 2015 and greeted the announcement positively.

The Office of the Coordinator General, responsible for delivering the project, has investigated alternative locations for MOCCA. The Office identified Blocks 33, 39 and part of Block 34, Section 78, Griffith, behind the Griffith Shops on Throsby Lane, as an alternative site. Investigations will continue to facilitate MOCCA's relocation to this site.

As the tennis courts at Montgomery Oval are no longer required for MOCCA, the lease will be granted to ETD. In the spirit of maintaining access to open space in the inner south, the tennis courts will be available for use by the whole community.

Planning—Campbell service station—petition No 8-15

The response read as follows:

Thank you for your letter regarding Petition No. 8-15 about the state of the old Campbell service station site.

The petition requests the Assembly take immediate action to require the lessee make the service station site safe and secure; maintains site security and cleanliness and brings forward a Development Application for the site.

In response to the requests I can advise a project to erect a solid fence around the Campbell service station site commenced in early August 2015. A contractor has been engaged and has advised the fence will be completed in the immediate future. The purpose of the fence will be to obstruct the site from view, improving the visual amenity of the area and addressing security concerns until such time the site is redeveloped.

To enhance the visual appearance of the fence, and to give it a community feel, we will be inviting a local artist and school children from the surrounding area to paint it.

This is a privately owned block which is not under the direct control of the ACT Government. The ACT Government has no powers under the *Planning and Development Act 2007* to require the owner to develop the block. It is the responsibility of the landowner to bring forth a Development Application for any future development and we have been advised by the owners that they intend to sell the property by early 2016.

On this basis, and with the abovementioned project due for completion in September, the Government considers this matter finalised.

Clerk—absence

MADAM SPEAKER: I wish to advise members that, due to the absence of the Clerk on leave, the Deputy Clerk will act as Clerk for the duration of the Clerk's leave, which is approximately one month.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Mr Smyth**) agreed to:

That Mrs Jones be granted leave of absence for this sitting for family reasons.

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

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.03): Pursuant to standing order 246A I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services relating to a recent meeting hosted by the committee with a group of ACT school students who were chosen to represent the Parliament of Youth on Sustainability.

As members may be aware, 162 students from 24 ACT schools came together at the Parliament of Youth on Sustainability at the ANU in June this year. They assembled to address this question: what is one action for our future we should take to tackle climate change? During the parliament's committee sessions 43 proposals were discussed, leading to 11 proposals being brought to a full parliamentary session. Students then voted for their six preferred proposals and elected student ministers to present them to the committee. The project was coordinated by SEE-Change with support from ACT government and sponsors.

On 19 August 2015 the committee met with 13 members of the student cabinet and their advisers to discuss the proposals, while over 30 supporters observed. Each student minister presented a summary of their proposal and answered questions from the committee. Following the formal presentation and question and answer session, the committee had the opportunity to continue informal discussions and share ideas with students over afternoon tea in the reception room. The committee was also able to discuss the project with project coordinators from SEE-Change as well as parents and teachers from participating schools.

The student ministers were from a range of age groups, with the youngest minister being in year 2 and the oldest in year 11. Proposals presented included addressing climate change by planting trees, educating people to buy local produce and understand their carbon footprint, making solar panels mandatory on all new buildings, shifting the economy to green options, and ensuring the effect of climate change on water is recognised as a human rights issue.

On behalf of the committee I thank the student ministers for meeting with us and sharing their ideas with such enthusiasm. It was clear to the committee that the final recommendations had been well thought out and developed in consultation with all students who had participated in the project. I was very impressed with their knowledge, research and the articulate and passionate way they presented their proposals. The meeting provided an opportunity for the students to learn more about the Assembly and our processes and for the committee to hear the views and ideas of

the ACT's young people. Each one—and this was no exception—was a tribute to Canberra's youth and their thoughtfulness about the future they want to be a part of building.

Finally, for the information of all members, I seek leave to present a copy of the white paper developed as part of the youth parliament containing the proposals and work of the parliament.

Leave granted.

MS FITZHARRIS: I present a copy of the following paper:

Parliament of Youth on Sustainability—Action for Our Future—White Paper—
“What is one action for our future we should take to tackle climate change?”,
dated June 2015.

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

I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period—1 January 2015 to 30 June 2015—the standing committee considered eight statutory appointments. For each of these appointments the committee advised the minister it had no recommendations to make.

In accordance with continuing resolution 5A, I now table the following paper:

Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing
Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—8th Assembly—Period
1 January to 30 June 2015.

Vocational education and training Ministerial statement

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for the Arts) (10.06): I present the following paper:

Vocational education and training for secondary students in ACT public
schools—ministerial statement, 15 September 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

I am pleased to present to the Assembly the review of vocational education and training in ACT public schools—future directions, final report—and the Education and Training Directorate's response to these future directions.

The ACT has a high achieving secondary school system characterised by some of the highest rates of student achievement and teaching excellence that makes us the envy of the nation in many regards. The ACT also has a quality tertiary education and training system that supports individuals in our community to gain the skills and qualifications they need to find fulfilling careers in our diversifying economy.

The ACT has a strong report card when it comes to secondary schooling outcomes. We can boast many achievements, including high levels of attainment of the year 12 certificate or equivalent, some of the best rates for post-school transitions in the nation from school to further education or employment, and high student satisfaction with the VET experience in schools. But we cannot be complacent. We must continue to strive to do better by our students and by the community.

There are challenges and opportunities that we can tackle. We can do more to build the skilled workforce our local business and industry needs. We can better identify our region's skills needs and shortages. We can do the hard work to remedy and prevent youth unemployment in the community, and we can educate young people for future employment in industries that are constantly changing and evolving.

I initiated this review last year, seeing it as an opportunity to take a closer look at the intersection of our secondary schooling and training systems—that is, where vocational education and training is offered to students in ACT secondary schools. This review follows work all jurisdictions undertook in 2014 to modernise the national framework for VET in schools, preparing secondary students for work.

The modernised framework was developed by a working group of the Education Council. It articulates the fundamental components of a quality education system for secondary students—that is, clarity of terminology, purpose and expectations of outcomes, collaboration to meet the needs of students, schools and employers, confidence in the quality, value and long-term benefits of VET, and core systems that are efficient, streamlined and support the best interests of students and employers.

Importantly, what also comes through in the framework is the imperative for change. I quote directly from the framework:

The world that shaped current delivery models of vocational education has changed, and continues to do so. Technology, globalisation and socioeconomic demands are driving changes in schooling, vocational learning and VET.

Madam Speaker, this sentiment is quite clear in the report and the response that I present to the Assembly today. This review also builds on the many successes we have already achieved under the national partnership agreement on skills reform. Under this agenda we have been driving higher quality training that is relevant to individuals, employers and industry, a more transparent VET sector with improved cross-jurisdictional understanding, a more efficient VET sector that is responsive to the needs of students, employers and industry, more accessible training and a more equitable training system.

We have high aspirations for the training of secondary students, aspirations that I consider equal in importance to other areas of the secondary schooling curriculum. Training for secondary school students should be robust, of high quality, accessible and of unquestionable value. Our system should offer students breadth and depth in their choices, flexibility to take charge of their learning, and support to make well-informed choices about their future. It should prepare students to make effective transitions to the workforce and further education and training for careers in a dynamic and modern community.

Young people have an entitlement to high quality education and training. With these aspirations in mind, I directed the Education and Training Directorate to commence this review to rethink the way we support our secondary school students in vocational education and training.

A consortium of highly qualified and experienced researchers from the Centre for International Research on Education Systems at the Victoria University was commissioned to lead this review work. Throughout the first half of this year the consultants engaged in thorough research and extensive communications with stakeholders across the sector. This included teachers, parents, local employers and industry groups, the Board of Senior Secondary Studies and our large public provider, the Canberra Institute of Technology.

At the same time, the Education and Training Directorate surveyed students about their VET studies. I was very pleased to hear that more than 190 students responded. I would like to thank everyone who gave their time to be interviewed and consulted in this review.

What I present to the Assembly is an independently developed evidence base for the future reform of vocational education and training for secondary students in ACT schools. Implementing these future reform directions will take time and it will take commitment, but I am pleased to say that the Education and Training Directorate has accepted all future directions in its response. I also know that the Canberra Institute of Technology and the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies are likewise committed to implementing these real and lasting reforms.

I will speak now about how the ACT government will drive these reforms from here. First, it is crucial that our sector is underpinned by confidence in the purpose of training delivery and the value of student outcomes. This is why we will improve clarity and confidence for key stakeholders through clear articulation of the goals, vision and purpose of VET for ACT secondary students. Some of the observations in the report I know will resonate well with all three schooling sectors and I invite our Catholic and independent school sector colleagues to work with the government to develop this vision statement for all secondary students in the ACT.

Second, I see it as imperative that students have workplace learning opportunities that bring them into direct contact with the workplace so that we can improve collaboration with business, industries and vocational and further education providers. This will build the confidence of employers, students and parents alike.

Madam Speaker, our students deserve to access high quality training that is both flexible and efficient. We must also ensure we provide our schools with the enabling framework to operate in this space. This will necessitate reducing the number of schools operating as registered training organisations, while simultaneously ensuring better cooperation and coordination between schools so as not to limit the choices and quality of programs—indeed, to grow the quality of choice of programs.

Over time we will rationalise the number of schools operating as registered training organisations to implement a network approach to planning and provision, ensuring schools cooperate and not duplicate, reduce costs and better target the VET funds, reduce red tape to reduce the administrative burden on teachers and administrative systems, and increase efficiency and effectiveness of programs in our schools.

It is also imperative that ACT schools access training from reputable providers that model the highest levels of quality assurance and quality control practices in meeting the national training standards. We will improve core systems and business processes to ensure and maintain compliance with the ASQA standards for registered training organisations 2015.

Given our size, it is crucial that the public VET system collaborates on practical issues and shared experiences and makes the best use of public training infrastructure, which is why the Education and Training Directorate will increase collaboration by working in partnership with CIT to explore, identify and implement strategies that support maximising access to shared services, broadened offerings, refined scope of provision, reduced risk and reduced cost. We must also ensure that our core systems enable integration of VET within senior secondary schooling, compliance with national reporting requirements and reporting of VET data. We will work with the BSSS to improve these processes of managing student data and the way we recognise VET in the senior secondary school certificate.

Finally, it is important that our schools prudently and diligently manage their resources to meet the community's expectations for quality training, increase market stability and encourage industry confidence. To this end we will explore options for the use of resourcing allocations to further enable access to quality provision through reviewing existing funding distribution arrangements, implementing flexible network provision, accessing centralised procurement and incentivising preferred policy outcomes.

The Victoria University consortium was tasked with developing an evidence base for best practice in VET for secondary students and it has delivered that in the form of this report. I appreciate that real and lasting reform will take time and that this will not be achieved overnight. But I am pleased with the level of commitment that I am seeing from the Education and Training Directorate in its response and from the CIT and BSSS as key partners in this reform.

I look forward to the implementation of sustainable innovation that these directions are signalling. Indeed, I am very pleased to see the Tuggeranong network is taking a lead in delivering on this reform and taking very active steps to show other networks

how this can be achieved. I am confident that the imperatives I have outlined will ensure students, parents and industry can be reassured that vocational education and training will continue to be regarded as a high quality, legitimate and very rewarding pathway for young people to pursue their careers.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (10.18): This morning the minister has noted seven key areas of reform identified in the ACT's education and training sector which will result in a more diverse and meaningful curriculum for at least 15,000 secondary students in ACT public schools. These reforms will provide important opportunities for our students to explore within their secondary education by studying in VET subjects.

Out of the seven key areas of reform I would like to highlight two in particular. The first is that of ensuring that students have workplace learning opportunities. Work placements are an important aspect of practical learning for students. Work placements allow students to apply theory learnt at school in the workplace environment, an action often lacking in many mainstream school subjects. Placements also equip students with sound skills that can be applied in future jobs and careers. I certainly support the minister's promise to improve business collaboration with education providers.

The second area of reform is that of improving the interaction of education providers to maximise the use of public training infrastructure. Efficiency and collaboration are key to providing unique and worthwhile experiences for students. I support the announcement of the Education and Training Directorate to work closely with CIT to investigate strategies that will reduce cost, broaden subject offerings and maximise access to shared facilities.

I will talk briefly about the national partnership agreement on skills reform. The reforms found from the review of vocational education and training in ACT public schools— future directions—complement many of the national reform agreements already in practice in the territory. By improving our delivery of VET education in ACT public secondary schools we are ensuring that many students can benefit from our national agreements. One such agreement is that of the national partnership agreement on skills reform, a significant reform in our education sector. The national agreement is complemented by the ACT skills needs list and the skilled capital initiative. These initiatives combined are strengthening the quality, access and transparency provided in our great territory.

The reforms noted today will enable students to have access to vocational education and training that is right for them. It is our duty as a government to support all students and assist them in achieving their aspirations for their future. These reforms are so important because they provide students with opportunities that they can directly transfer into further study or employment after leaving school. I am sure that the majority of the vocational education and training community agree that young people deserve to have opportunities to engage in learning and experiences that will build their pathways post their school experience. The reforms outlined by the minister will ensure that those students who choose to undertake VET subjects will have quality education and important interactions with the community and with industry.

As the minister has described, there is a solid plan to build on the many successes in our territory's VET sector. At the ACT Training Excellence Awards earlier this month the successes of the sector were on display. At the ceremony the territory's apprentices, trainees, students, teachers, trainers, RTOs, group training organisations and employers were recognised for their commitment and achievements. These positive stories, especially from students, about their vocational education and training experiences show how far the sector has progressed.

The seven key areas of reform outlined in the future directions review will continue to support the high quality delivery of vocational education and training to our students. We owe it to our students who choose to undertake VET courses to provide them with superior, integrated educational experiences so that they can progress into their post-school lives with practical skills. I believe that these reforms will assist students to do so.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Refugees and asylum seekers

Ministerial statement

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) (10.22): I present the following paper:

ACT response to refugees and asylum seekers—Ministerial statement,
15 September 2015.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

As countries across Europe and the world seek to respond to the acute refugee crisis brought on by the conflict in Syria and Iraq many Canberrans are thinking about our role in this response. The ACT government has welcomed the federal government's decision to accept an intake of 12,000 humanitarian entrants and is committed to doing our part in this. There is a lot of detail still to be worked through as we carry through on this decision and I will work to keep the Assembly informed as the response progresses. What we can do at this point is reflect on the ACT as a community well prepared and willing to welcome refugees and people seeking asylum to our city.

I have spoken with many Canberrans shocked and saddened by the crisis which has played out in the Middle East and in Europe. Last Tuesday evening I joined a candlelight vigil with hundreds of people who had been moved to action by the heartbreaking image of Aylan Kurdi's body washed up on the shore of Turkey after his family had attempted to flee Syria. This moving vigil was repeated around Australia, attended by people from different political and religious backgrounds. It was also consistent with the caring nature of our community.

Canberra is a city with a proud history of offering welcome and refuge to people escaping war and persecution. Refugees and asylum seekers have always been part of Canberra's social, cultural and economic life. They have been welcomed, supported and included by communities across the territory and many of the thousands of refugees we have settled since self-government have gone on to change our community for the better. This includes nearly 2,000 humanitarian entrants since 1997.

We welcomed people fleeing violence in Latin America and soon after a resettlement from Kosovo. We have since welcomed people escaping persecution in Myanmar and Thailand, particularly the Mon and Karen communities; Sudanese families fleeing conflict, including many who have now become an important part of the community in my own neighbourhood of west Belconnen; and people fleeing ongoing violence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. They and many others have all found a safe place to live here in the ACT.

With this proud record in mind I was very pleased to declare the ACT a refugee welcome zone in June. Becoming a refugee welcome zone was a symbolic gesture acknowledging the way Canberrans all over this city have welcomed waves of refugees fleeing violence and persecution to their neighbourhoods, schools, sports teams and workplaces. It is worth noting this is not the first such declaration. In 2003, and in the face of divisive federal politics, this Assembly declared the ACT a refugee friendly city and has over the past decade worked to improve both our services and the culture of our city to live up to that aspiration.

That work has paid off. We are now a national leader in our approach to settlement and services for the newest members of our community. The ACT government plays an important role in providing services to support and assist refugees and asylum seekers to settle in our city. Along with access to our world class public health and education systems, the government runs programs aimed at helping refugees build successful lives in the Canberra community. Language and employment are key requirements for this to occur.

Getting into the workforce is important for refugees to successfully settle into our community but also is very difficult for people who often come with limited English. Depending on their situation, refugees are able to access English language programs through CIT or through ACT library services. Even once they have completed programs many migrants and refugees continue to attend conversation classes at our libraries long after their initial settlement as a way of staying connected in the community.

To support entry into the workforce the ACT government runs the work experience and support program, commonly known as WESP. WESP participants are offered four weeks of formal office skills training plus an eight-week work experience placement with the ACT public service. Successful WESP graduates will receive a nationally recognised certificate II in business. For those who already have a qualification the government offers an assessment of overseas qualifications services. By helping refugees negotiate the sometimes difficult process of having their external qualifications recognised we help people to get settled more quickly. There is also a collective benefit in this work, as we seek to limit the lost opportunities of ignoring skills of those who can contribute to our workforce and community life.

In 2011 the ACT government identified a need to ensure services were easily available to people in our community whose asylum claims were being processed. As a result the access card was introduced, aimed at ensuring services could be accessed without standard documentation such as a Medicare or concession card.

The position of unprocessed asylum seekers can be highly vulnerable. They often receive very limited support from the federal government and so do not often fully understand the services available to them. In the ACT, even where the federal government will not fund services, we work to make sure asylum seekers have access to education, health care and transport. The access card, provided through Companion House, helps people get access to these different services. What seems like a modest initiative can make a real difference for someone struggling to get to know a completely new way of life.

I also acknowledge the work of local services in the ongoing success of the ACT's resettlement program. A number of specialist organisations, workers and volunteers commit themselves to helping refugees and asylum seekers overcome trauma in their past and build a future here. They will be valuable partners in the expected boost in the numbers in coming months and initial conversations are now underway.

The Migrant and Refugee Settlement Service offers a range of casework, referral and advocacy services as well as community development programs. It is active in providing settlement services to hundreds of refugees and support to many migrants, with English language classes, homework assistance, learn to drive programs, computer classes and other activities to assist in settling into the community.

The Migrant and Refugee Settlement Service provides ongoing case management of refugees for approximately six months of their settlement journey and short-term accommodation upon arrival in the ACT. It also helps in the sourcing and securing of long-term accommodation, orientating around local suburbs and teaching the use of public transport, organising essential registrations such as Centrelink, Medicare, banking and schools, and linking with social groups, among other things.

Companion House provides key health services, medical referrals and trauma counselling as well as other support programs. Companion House can provide general practice and primary health services for individuals in their first 12 months in Australia. Patients then continue to use Companion House medical services until a community GP for referral is found in their local area.

Red Cross, CatholicCare, Canberra Men's Centre, Canberra Refugee Support and church groups in the ACT have all been active in supporting refugees and asylum seekers with essential items such as housing and food. The Multicultural Youth Service also plays an important role in ensuring that young refugees and migrants settle well into our community, including a counselling service for those overcoming great trauma.

All these organisations paint the picture of a community that cares. Their work is ongoing, constantly supporting the process of inclusion. They are also great advocates

for the importance of diversity, compassion and acceptance as defining qualities of a mature and prosperous community. Unfortunately these qualities are not always on display in Australia.

I recognise the activists in our community who, in the face of complex and often divisive politics, continue to be a loud and public voice speaking out against the persecution and injustice that many refugees face. We would not have seen the decisions of recent days if it had not been for the sustained pressure from millions of people around the world. There are many Canberrans who are now relieved that they will, in future, be able to say that they played a part in opening the path to safety for Syrian and Iraqi refugees in this community just as many are proud of the role that they played in assisting the Kosovar and Latin American refugees who have contributed so significantly to this city.

As we look towards taking more people into our community we should be proud of our past achievements. They are proof that we can do it again and not just for the benefit of those we welcome but for our own benefit too. There is a lot to celebrate in our traditions of inclusion and equality in responding to persecution and injustice and in our commitment to giving all new residents access to all of these services and supports that make Canberra such a great place to live.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.32): I thank Ms Berry for bringing this matter forward. Clearly the situation that we have seen unfolding in the Middle East is a great tragedy. For those of us who have—and I know Mr Doszpot is a refugee in his past—served on the frontline, as I did in the Middle East and in East Timor, and have worked with organisations like UNHCR and IOM and seen firsthand the flight of refugees, helped and assisted with refugees from Kosovo as they are accommodated many times in the community in Army bases, this is a great tragedy and it is good that we as a nation and we as a territory are doing our bit to help the people fleeing persecution, people fleeing what is some of the most evil actions that certainly we have witnessed in our lifetimes from Islamic State.

I hope that this is an occasion where we can join together as a community and support these initiatives. I must say that I was a little disappointed in Ms Berry's reference to divisive federal politics and bringing the federal political situation into the frame. I take this occasion to remind those opposite that it is because we now have secure borders that we are in a much better position and that the federal government, the federal Liberal government, has been able to take on so many additional refugees from Syria, 12,000 additional refugees. This would not have been possible under the Labor policies which are still advocated by those opposite. I remind members when they talk about the tragedy, the great human despair that we have seen on the television screens, that under the regime of the previous federal Labor government we saw 1,200 people drown. That was a great tragedy.

I say to those opposite who still advocate for change as they do—as Ms Berry, Mr Gentleman and others still advocate for a return to the policies of the previous Gillard and Rudd governments where we saw 1,200 people drown on our borders and we saw the influx of people by boat that would have meant that the sort of compassionate welcoming of Syrian refugees that we have seen by the federal

government would be impossible—that is no less a tragedy. So I ask those opposite, who would probably count themselves amongst the activists, to consider where we are today where we do have secure borders, where the drownings, the great human tragedy on our borders, have ceased and there are no more drownings so that we will be able as a community and as a nation in future to welcome 12,000 Syrian refugees. That is a great thing.

Let us proceed with some degree of bipartisanship. I advise Ms Berry that if she wants to bring political divisiveness into this place and talk about divisiveness of the federal government, then I would suggest that she do so with caution because when it comes to the facts, when it comes to the evidence, when it comes to welcoming refugees—whether it be under John Howard with the unfolding tragedy we saw in Kosovo or whether it is the current Liberal government—it is the current federal Liberal government and the past federal Liberal government that controlled our borders, welcomed refugees and stopped the drownings which was ultimately the great tragedy on our borders.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed from 4 June 2015, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.37): Madam Speaker, the opposition will be supporting this legislation. The bill makes amendments to over 70 acts aimed at reducing red tape. There are five significant elements to the bill: firstly, public notices. The bill amends various references in ACT legislation that specifically require a public notice be advertised in the newspaper to allow for selection of the most effective means of communication of achieving public notification. Obviously in a digital age, this is a logical step forward.

Secondly, the bill deals with Access Canberra functions. Access Canberra is established as a regulatory agency and the bill includes amendments to the Public Sector Management Act 1994 to support Access Canberra as a one-stop regulatory agency for business and events.

Amendments to the Hawkers Act 2003 include the licensing of hawkers as part of the Public Unleased Land Act. Requirements for hawkers remain, but duplication between a couple of acts has been removed. Amendments to the Public Unleased Land Act with regard to permits increase them from two to three years, and changes to reporting of wages for workers compensation for insurance purposes mean that reporting requirement is extended from once every six months to once every 12 months.

The Canberra Liberals will always support any sensible measures aimed at reducing regulation, duplication and red tape. But in supporting these changes I note that many of them are about the machinery of government—that is, the reduction in the burden

of administration is actually a reduction for government rather than for business. I encourage the government to continue with bills of this sort, and I encourage the government to focus on reducing red tape for business and not just for themselves.

There is a minor amendment to clean up some language that we will be supporting; it has no consequence to the bill. We will be supporting this bill, and I look forward to further bills being brought forward by the government to reduce the burden of red tape on the community and not just on government.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.40): This bill has a raft of amendments in it that all relate to trying to reduce the administrative burden from a range of areas across government. It covers changes to newspaper advertising of government notices; the creation of Access Canberra in the Public Sector Management Act; the Hawkers Act and Public Unleased Land Act consolidation; and Workers Compensation Act reporting requirements.

When it comes to newspaper advertising of government notices, this bill changes references in all the relevant pieces of ACT legislation—about 80 acts—relating to publishing notices in a newspaper. The bill does not intend to at all diminish the government's commitment and intent to ensure that the government continues to consult with and notify the public on issues and processes where public notification already occurs. What the bill does is replace any clauses that specify that public notice must be given through publishing in a newspaper to instead state that public notice must be given. The definition of "public notice" is being broadened to include information on an ACT government website or information in a daily newspaper circulating in the ACT.

It is important that this definition of public notice is updated. The digital age is having a huge impact on our communications and people are changing at a fairly rapid pace their habits of from where they get their information. I cannot imagine how many people actually read the public notices section of the newspaper anymore. I am sure there are still some, but I think it is a declining tradition. At this stage I believe that it is the government's intention to continue to place notices in our daily newspaper, ideally with a direction to new government websites, but notices will also be made available online on relevant ACT government websites.

We live in a time where the overwhelming majority—over 90 per cent of Canberrans—have regular access to computers, so moving towards online notifications makes sense. But we have to be very careful that we do not leave behind those people who do not have regular online access. We must be sure we do not accidentally exclude people from lower income households or people who might be unemployed and do not have access to computers at work, for example.

This is a great opportunity for the government to think differently about public communications, to ensure that we are talking to the right people and to better target online information to particular relevant audiences. But as we transition to new processes, we need to keep an eye on who is able to access the information online and who actually accesses it. We should ensure that internal government procedures cover this issue, including targeted stakeholder communications.

Turning to the Public Sector Management Act amendments, the bill creates Access Canberra as an administrative unit of government and enables the Chief Minister to determine the functions of Access Canberra and delegate responsibilities to the head of Access Canberra, who may further delegate responsibilities to other public servants.

Access Canberra has been established in the last year to attempt to funnel as many government approvals as possible into one government directorate, allowing it to then better focus on its customer service functions. It is unusual to legislate for a particular directorate. The Chief Minister has the power to make administrative changes to directorates as needed, including changing their names and the overall structure. This clause will enshrine Access Canberra by legislation as a business unit in our government structure rather than simply by administrative arrangements issued by a notifiable instrument. Time will tell whether this is necessary in the long run.

The Hawkers Act has been in place since 2003 and that replaced the 1936 Hawkers Act. The act regulates hawking or sales of goods in public places. This act covers the requirements for licensing hawkers, where they can sell goods, for how long a person can sell goods in one spot without a licence, exemptions and administration. In 2013 the Assembly passed the Public Unleased Land Act which governs how people can use public lands. This includes hawking, and thus there has been a significant overlap in the role of the Hawkers Act since the Public Unleased Land Act commenced. This bill does not seek to make substantial changes to hawking arrangements in the ACT; rather, it seeks to streamline legislative requirements into one single act.

Finally, the bill covers changes to the Workers Compensation Act by reducing reporting requirements so that employers need only report annually to their workers compensation insurers on their estimated wages rather than every six months. To ensure this does not have serious consequences for insurers in terms of them not knowing what companies' liabilities are, employers will be required to tell insurers within 30 days if their annual estimate is incorrect by more than \$500,000. The bill also adjusts the requirement for certificates of currency, to cover a 12-month period rather than a six-month period.

These reductions in regulatory requirements are all fairly minor; they are the types of changes that make sense in terms of red tape reduction. In terms of the changes to the public notice advertising requirements—perhaps the change of greatest public interest—I will be keeping an eye on how it rolls out over the coming years to make sure the community continues to be included as needed. The Greens will be supporting this bill today.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.46), in reply: I thank the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Rattenbury for their support of the legislation. This bill is indeed part of the government's significant program of regulatory reform initiatives and removes a range of specific provisions that have been identified as redundant or unnecessary administrative burden to business or to government.

To streamline processes and to support efficient and effective regulatory outcomes, my government has committed to introducing at least one of these red tape reduction omnibus bills each year. This is in addition to a large amount of work being undertaken across the government to streamline and reduce regulation to make our city a better place to live, work and do business.

Through commitments such as this, my government is building on Canberra's strengths and unique characteristics to create a supportive regulatory environment. We are listening to the business sector and the community more broadly to understand what ease of business and reduced red tape means to them, and we are considering issues for reform of all sizes and scale.

Some of the reforms being progressed by the government include innovation reforms to the taxi and on-demand transport industry and the review of the Liquor Act. These projects represent significant change for the community, workers and business and are, necessarily, being considered through their own processes with active engagement of interested stakeholders. But there are many smaller yet still important regulatory reforms that may otherwise remain unaddressed in the absence of bills such as this one.

An important feature of a supportive business environment is an effective and trusted regulatory system. To maintain that we must ensure it remains relevant over time and adjusts with the evolving landscape, technologies and new ways of doing business. The amendments proposed in this bill do just that: they respond to the changing needs and preferences of the community and provide for improved effectiveness and cost efficiencies in the way government conducts its business. The government has established Access Canberra to facilitate a single contact point for regulatory services in the territory, and this bill supports the effective operation of that organisation.

The bill amends legislation including the Workers Compensation Act 1951, the Public Unleased Land Act 2013, the Public Sector Management Act 1994 and the Legislation Act 2001. The bill includes a new definition of "public notice" in the Legislation Act and amends various acts and regulations to enable public notices to be made electronically on an ACT government website. The bill repeals the Hawkers Act 2003 and instead includes provisions for hawkers in the Public Unleased Land Act 2013. This is one less act on the statute book and a far better integration of existing legislation.

In relation to the amendments around public notices, the government is absolutely committed to both increasing people's access to information and to enhancing digital services. In the past decade there has been a significant change in how people access information, with a dramatic shift to online and digital services. This is particularly evident in Canberra where we have the highest use of the internet in Australia. Amendments to the definition of "public notice" proposed in the bill recognise this shift and provide the option for public notices to be published on an ACT government website. This measure increases flexibility in how the government communicates and will result in better targeting of messages and information to the community.

Public notices are an important source of information for the community and business, and we need to ensure that they are communicated in a number of ways that will be the most effective means of reaching the intended audience. This change will maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of our communications in accordance with legislative requirements. It complements other initiatives to increase the awareness of information, including the whole-of-government digital mail service which enables the electronic distribution of ACT government communications, including statutory notices.

The revised definition of “public notice” in the bill does not preclude the option of advertising in a newspaper, and newspapers will continue to be used in circumstances where they are considered the most effective communication method for the intended audience. Our local media is an important component of ACT community life, and the government will continue to engage with all public media channels to deliver information to the community. I foresee an ongoing contribution of the print media in reaching out on public issues. While complementing work to make Canberra a digital economy, the government expects newspapers to remain an important tool for communicating with a section of the public.

In December last year I announced the establishment of Access Canberra. Since then Access Canberra has brought together a number of customer service and regulatory arms of government to provide a one-stop shop for government information and services. It certainly has achieved a lot in red tape reduction and has improved access to regulatory services for businesses and individuals in that short period.

This bill includes amendments to the Public Sector Management Act to allow the head of Access Canberra to exercise and delegate relevant functions in undertaking this role. It is an important reform that supports further enhancement of the way the community connects with government and will ensure Access Canberra can deliver services to business and the broader community in the most efficient way possible.

The government will continue to work closely with industry and the community in progressing regulatory reforms and specific legislative amendments such as these. We will continue to engage with stakeholders on those regulations that impose unnecessary burdens, costs or disadvantages on business activity within the territory, including through the regulatory reform panel, which is a key forum for feedback on red tape reduction opportunities.

The next reform the bill proposes is a reduction in the reporting requirements for employers in the territory in regard to workers compensation insurance. At present territory employers are required to provide a six-monthly statement, known as a wage declaration, to their insurers describing the number of paid and unpaid workers, total wages paid and the approximate amount of time each worker worked for the employer during the reporting period.

The amendments will provide now for annual rather than six-monthly reporting by employers to insurers under the Workers Compensation Act. This change is estimated to remove around 70,000 extra administrative transactions undertaken by employers,

insurance brokers and insurers each year, amounting to a reduction in administration costs for business in excess of \$2 million per annum. The reform is also expected to play a part in relieving the upward cost pressure on workers compensation premiums.

In streamlining these reporting requirements for all employers, it is also important that we maintain the integrity of the regulatory system, and moving to a 12-monthly cycle will not reduce regulatory oversight. The bill includes a requirement on employers to advise insurers if the employer's estimated total wages is understated by more than half a million dollars during the reporting period. In addition, recent improvements in technology will allow inspectors to check employers' insurance status and wage information using a newly developed database which is updated monthly by insurers.

As mentioned, the bill also repeals the Hawkers Act. The activities of hawkers can be effectively regulated under the Public Unleased Land Act, which applies to all activities on public land. As such, there is no public benefit in retaining a separate act to regulate one specific activity. Repeal of the Hawkers Act will clarify any perceived legislative duplication and makes clear for business which act governs the activities of hawkers. The bill includes transitional provisions for existing hawker licences to continue under the Public Unleased Land Act.

Finally, the amendments increase the maximum period for permits issued under the Public Unleased Land Act from two to three years. A permit is required under the act to use public land in a way that may impact on its amenity or on other people's enjoyment of it. Circumstances where this requirement would apply may include a one-off or repeated event such as holding a concert in a park, an ongoing activity such as outdoor dining, or placing an object such as a waste skip on public land.

Extending the maximum period for issuing permits from two to three years will provide increased benefits to business and increase regulatory certainty, particularly for organisations seeking to utilise public land in an appropriate way for long periods. The measure will reduce the administration of licence renewals, which is, of course, a direct cost to business.

My government will continue to create the right regulatory environment for businesses and individuals in the territory, and we will pursue opportunities for reducing red tape, streamlining processes for business and making the use of government resources more efficient. Government is committed to an ongoing program of reform to improve the regulatory environment for our citizens and the business community.

The reforms I have presented could seem minor and insignificant to some, yet when combined with previous, current and future red tape reduction initiatives still to come, they mesh to form a more streamlined, efficient and relevant system of governance for our community. They are part of a broader reform agenda that acknowledges the changing needs and desires of the community. Current major reform initiatives such as the taxi innovation review and the liquor review will continue. Others will be defined and acted upon as the shared economy grows and technology advances.

These reforms represent continual improvement and the pursuit of a balanced regulatory environment with streamlined processes to make regulatory requirements efficient and effective. I thank colleagues for their support of this legislation.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (10.57): Pursuant to standing order 182A(b), I seek leave to move amendments Nos 1 to 5 circulated in my name together as they are minor and technical in nature.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I move amendments Nos 1 to 5 circulated in my name and table a supplementary explanatory statement to the government amendments [*see schedule 1 at page 3036*].

These are technical amendments to update the section references to the amendments to the Gaming Machine Act 2004 as a consequence of changes to that act by the Gaming Machine Reform Amendment Act 2015.

Amendments agreed to.

Bill, as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Financial Management Amendment Bill 2015

Debate resumed from 4 June 2015, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.59): The opposition will be supporting this bill today, and I thank the Treasurer for presenting the bill for debate and also for providing my office with a briefing on this important bill. From the explanatory statement, the bill proposes a range of amendments to improve and modernise the Financial Management Act, mainly to the appropriation and budget management provisions. According to the government, a number of existing provisions are too rigid and constrain the government's ability to quickly respond to emerging priorities and community expectations. The bill proposes amendments to the Financial Management

Act 1996 to provide flexibility to the government to respond to emerging priorities, reduce red tape by streamlining the administrative requirements, reduce ambiguity by making the provisions simpler and clearer, and increase transparency and accountability to the Legislative Assembly and the community.

Key considerations that the government brought to my office's attention during the briefing include the following: clause 6 replaces the existing subsection words "the provision of outputs by the directorate" with the words "any controlled recurrent payment to be provided to the directorate", signifying a shift in funding recurring inputs rather than outputs. Clause 27 allows for the transfer of funds between capital and recurrent appropriations of up to five per cent or \$500,000 if this occurs via instrument signed by the Treasurer. If more than five per cent or \$500,000 it will be done by disallowable instrument.

Clause 47 notes that if a Treasurer's advance is given but not spent it goes back into the Treasurer's advance bucket. Additionally if a sub-appropriation bill passes, money from the Treasurer's advance is replenished by the bill being passed. Clause 81 allows for directors-general to enter into multiyear contracts and MOUs relating to the operation of a directorate.

This bill has the technical prudence of the ACT public service and as it is a machine-of-government bill we are supportive of these amendments. However, an amendment bill in the hands of this Chief Minister and his cabinet, allowing them greater flexibility to commit and move ACT taxpayers' funds, is something we should be concerned about and keep a great watching eye on. This bill purports to remove red tape but the only red tape they seem to be removing is bureaucratic processes that would make it easier for them to spend on their legacy projects. And I note Mr Hanson had the same comments to make on the red tape bill that we have just passed as well.

For instance, with capital metro, a significant part of these changes will impact on this government's capital spending and this is in light of the last budget where we saw significant underreporting of the government's capital expenditure items and funding flows with its capital provision allowances. We see this best summarised in the CIE's report on the budget where they concluded:

Without any further details provided on the flow of funds into and out of this capital provisions pool or on the estimated allocations to different projects within the pool, there are limited conclusions that can be drawn from this information.

In fact, regarding the government's capital metro project the CIE report stated:

... it is not clear what payments for the Capital Metro are accounted for in the Capital Provisions.

They go on to say:

The lack of clarity is further enhanced by a lack of detail around whether the \$51.8 million of capital expenditure for Capital Metro has come out of the capital provision fund.

And then there is more. They go on to say:

It is not clear how the \$452 million is anticipated to be allocated across the forward estimates, nor is it clear how the \$452 million relates to the \$1.5 billion in the capital provision allowance.

You, Madam Speaker, like me, will recall the Gungahlin Drive debacle which sucked the life out of the rest of the capital works budget and was very unclear as the government quadrupled the price of the project. This is only one example. With such comments made by a qualified and objective review of the government's budget, you can understand why an amendment bill like this, purporting to make it easier for the government to fund their initiatives and shift taxpayers' money, could be thought of as a bit worrying. It is not the legislation but how the government will use this legislation.

Although we will be supporting this amendment bill, the Canberra Liberals will be following closely this government's application of these changes and any further amendments the government makes to the operation of the FMA which affects the people of the ACT and the budget.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.04): This bill aims to simplify and streamline financial reporting requirements while also increasing transparency and accountability to the Assembly and the wider community. The government has undertaken an extensive review of the Financial Management Act, particularly in the areas of appropriation and budget management. This bill today is a direct result of that review, and there will also be improvements to the next budget process as a result of this review.

This bill covers a range of changes to the Financial Management Act, including the provision in the act which currently requires reporting in the Assembly on a range of appropriation variations within three sitting days of the appropriation being authorised. This bill removes those reporting requirements to instead move to a quarterly financial statement from the Treasurer that covers any of these changes.

This bill also introduces a new division on capital works reporting, including six-monthly capital works reporting to the Assembly. This report will include progress on delivery of all capital works underway in the previous six months and must be tabled within 60 sitting days of the end of the reporting period or otherwise circulated out of session to members.

There is also a new section to ensure that the director-general of a directorate must manage the directorate in a way that promotes the achievement of the purpose of the directorate, the financial sustainability of the directorate, and is not inconsistent with the policies of the government. The director-general must also take into account the effect of those decisions on public resources generally. This section is in line with the line of sight and triple bottom line reporting principles which ensure that the government's expenditure is attuned to the delivery of the government's key strategies and priorities. And that is something that the Greens have been particularly keen to see for a number of years now.

This bill will also ensure that CEOs of territory authorities are required to promote the achievement of the purpose and the financial stability of the authority. The bill also introduces the ability for directors-general to enter into a memorandum of understanding or contract relating to the operations of the directorate. This is something that has obviously been the case anyway but will now be clarified in legislation.

The bill amends the requirements around statements of intent for territory authorities with additional requirements including reporting on estimated results for the previous financial year, which will enable comparisons across financial years; budget estimates for the next three financial years; a statement on any capital injection that must be repaid; and the outputs, classes of outputs and appropriations to those that the authority will provide during the year. However, if a territory authority presents a proposed budget to the Assembly under section 10(c), or usual appropriation bill, it will not need to prepare a statement of intent.

The clauses around the Treasurer's advance are being amended to give further reasons for the Treasurer to authorise an advanced appropriation. The Treasurer may authorise a temporary advance of expenditure for a new purpose or new entity if the Treasurer is satisfied that there is an immediate requirement for the expenditure. As in the current legislation, this advance must be appropriated in the immediately following budget. There is also a clause in this bill that ensures that if the Treasurer's advance is not fully disbursed the undisbursed amount lapses and is unable to be disbursed in the following financial year. Any changes under these clauses require reporting in the quarterly financial statement.

Annual financial statements will also need to be signed by the Under Treasurer to ensure that the Under Treasurer is satisfied that the financial statements have been correctly prepared. It will then be the Under Treasurer's responsibility to give these statements to the Auditor-General, rather than the current requirement of the Treasurer.

These annual financial statements will have to be given to the Auditor-General within sufficient time to allow the Auditor-General to give an audit opinion within four months of the end of the financial year. This arrangement is less prescriptive than the current legislation, which requires the financial statements to be given to the Auditor-General within three months of the end of the financial year, and the Auditor-General then had 30 days to give an audit opinion.

The half-yearly directorate performance reporting requirements are to be given an extra 15 days for preparation, meaning that they will now need to be prepared and presented to the Assembly within 45 days of the end of the calendar year, rather than the current 30 days. If the Assembly does not have a sitting period the report must be circulated to members out of session.

Many of the changes in the bill are largely related to rollovers. Members would be aware of the onerous rollover reporting and tabling requirements that currently exist. Given that these rollovers are individually tabled in the Assembly on a regular and

ongoing basis under the current arrangement and many of these rollovers are quite small and fairly insignificant, the Treasurer can now direct transfers of capital works funding to other appropriation outputs, noting that if the transfer reduces the appropriation by up to \$500,000 or five per cent of the amount the Treasurer must report this to the Assembly as part of the quarterly reporting requirement. If the reduction is more than \$500,000 or five per cent the direction becomes a disallowable instrument. This is an increase on the current threshold. I think the new approach retains the suitable level of transparency.

Appropriations from commonwealth grants to specific entities will be able to be transferred to another entity in order to fulfil the grant project in cases of changes to administrative arrangements. This is especially useful in cases where the commonwealth has granted funds to the ACT government but the funds were not directly appropriated to the territory entity undertaking the project. The transfer of funds between appropriations will increase the flexibility of transfer for specific projects so that projects can be funded by expenditure on behalf of the territory as well as from GPO.

All of these changes are designed to ease the processes while ensuring that both the Assembly and the general public as well as key agencies are able to maintain a level of scrutiny and oversight. I do believe that the amendments to this bill today are improvements on current practices and on that basis we will be supporting the bill in the Assembly.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.10), in reply: I again thank the opposition and Minister Rattenbury for their support of this legislation. The Financial Management Act is the key legislation for the financial management of the territory's resources. It has remained largely unchanged since its commencement in 1996. Although there are no major issues with the FMA in its current form there is scope to enhance the effectiveness of the legislation, and the constraints associated with some of the existing provisions hinder the government's ability to quickly and effectively respond to change in priorities and community expectations.

So it is time to modernise the territory's financial management legislation and provide a progressive and more robust framework that is effective both now and into the future, a framework that enhances the ability of the government to be more nimble, agile and responsive to the territory community. The bill results from an ongoing Financial Management Act review being undertaken by the government and focuses mainly on areas of appropriation and budget management. The suite of proposed amendments aims to reduce red tape and ambiguity and also address some of the existing rigidities by streamlining current provisions and putting in place arrangements that are more efficient and effective.

These amendments are designed to deliver more flexible appropriation management within an appropriate financial management framework. The proposed measures provide the government the means to progress initial preparatory work on new initiatives pending the passing of the first appropriation act. They also enable the government to redirect funding to meet changing priorities and pressures promptly

and efficiently. These changes will allow the government to deliver its priorities in a timely and risk managed manner while still preserving the important role of the Assembly in approving appropriation.

In addition the bill provides a funding mechanism for expenditure pending the passing of a supplementary appropriation bill. This amendment enhances the visibility of scrutiny of the expenditure via a supplementary appropriation process where feasible. It also allows the government the flexibility it needs to respond to emerging territory priorities. The bill recognises the need for directors-general to enter into multiyear contracts. However, to ensure that in using this power the directors-general act in a prudent and risk managed manner, it broadens their existing responsibilities.

The proposed responsibilities require directors-general to manage their directorates in a way that promotes the achievement of the purpose of their directorate and promotes the financial sustainability of their directorate. The directors-general must also take into account the impact of their decisions on the territory's resources generally. Further, the proposed changes also address the existing disjointed presentation of individual appropriation instruments and replaces it with an administratively more integrated, coordinated and transparent process of scheduled quarterly reporting to the Legislative Assembly.

Care has been taken to ensure that the additional flexibility and administrative efficiencies that are expected to result from these amendments do not compromise the government's obligations of transparency and accountability to the Legislative Assembly and the community. In fact they strengthen the existing reporting requirements by legislating a number of reporting items, the provision of which is currently at the discretion of the government. These include the government's spending intentions in the budget papers and periodic capital works reporting.

The bill has staggered commencement provisions with some provisions commencing on the first day of the next quarter after notification while others commence on 1 July 2016 to align with the beginning of the next financial year. This is intended to allow for a seamless transition to the revised arrangements.

This bill is a clear statement of the government's commitment to responsible and appropriate financial management and will allow the government of the day to respond to emerging community needs promptly while upholding the important role the Legislative Assembly plays in relation to appropriation. It also enhances the transparency and accountability to both the Assembly and the community. Importantly I consider that this bill will improve the territory government's ability to respond to future economic challenges. I commend the bill to the Assembly and thank members for their support.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: I wish to welcome to the chamber the Taiwan youth ambassadors along with representatives of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office located here in Canberra. I understand that the youth ambassadors gave a very impressive performance at the National Gallery yesterday evening, and I wish you well on your visit to Australia.

Legislative Assembly delegation to Taiwan Report by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Members will be aware that recently I led an Assembly delegation to Taiwan. The other members of the delegation were Dr Bourke, Mr Wall and my senior adviser. We travelled at the invitation of and as guests of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canberra. Its representative is Dr David Lee, and I acknowledge and thank Dr Lee and his director, Mr Frank Lee, for the work they put into arranging the visit and managing the itinerary.

On 4 August I made a statement to the Assembly that I had determined that this trip was Assembly business. In making that statement I undertook to report on the delegation, and I do this now. Members, this visit to Taiwan was most beneficial and created important people-to-people links. In recognising Australia's one China policy, it is important also to recognise that Australia and Taiwan are important trading partners. Creating these links helps to strengthen the relationship Australia has with Taiwan.

The delegation met with a range of Taiwanese officials, visited a company developing innovative solar energy technology and experienced Taiwan's culture by visiting a number of important tourism destinations. One rather unfortunate incident during our visit was that my senior adviser sustained injury in an accident, but even that had a silver lining in that the delegation was able to view the workings of Taiwan's emergency services and hospital system at first hand. I am pleased to report that my senior adviser is now well on the way to recovery.

This report contains a number of recommendations for the government to consider and facilitate, and I will write directly to the Chief Minister about these issues as well. These recommendations seek to further strengthen our ties with Taiwan and to create opportunities for trade, cultural exchange and people-to-people links.

Finally, I thank representatives of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office and their colleagues in Taiwan for inviting members of the Assembly to visit Taiwan. It was a very busy but interesting and productive tour. For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Assembly Delegation to Taiwan—17-23 August 2015—Delegation report.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra), by leave: As we heard last month, members of the ACT Legislative Assembly, including me, went on a delegation to Taiwan. The delegation visited examples of Taiwan's cultural and technological prowess including the

Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, the Taiwan Excellence Pavilion displaying cutting-edge technology such as advanced medical equipment, and CJ-N Technology Co Ltd. I was especially impressed by Taiwan's research and investment in renewable energy technology. It echoes the ACT government's commitment to renewable energy and increasing expertise in renewable energy. Indeed, I can see the Canberra Institute of Technology's planned renewable energy skills centre of excellence providing opportunities for mutual investment and cooperation.

The high levels of investment in renewable energy in both Taiwan and here in the ACT show the achievements that can be made when governments commit to funding renewable energy and technological innovation. Imagine the opportunities that would have been lost if our ACT government had the same backward approach to renewable energy that the federal government promulgates. In Taiwan I saw these opportunities in action when I visited CJ-N Technology, a producer of fibre optics and solar tracking systems for photovoltaic solar power units.

Solar tracking systems allow solar panels to have a much higher efficiency than fixed panels as the solar panel is directly facing the sun for the majority of the day. Tracking systems are non-electronic, allowing solar panels to track the sun using the expansion of gas and hydraulic rams rather than electric motors and sensors, reducing both short and long-term costs and operating across a greater environmental temperature range than electronic trackers. We were able to see a three-kilowatt installation on the rooftop of the company's office.

Technologies like these are the future of renewable energy and show the possibilities for the future across the world. However, Taiwan's renewable energy industry has challenges which Canberra's own technology industry has the opportunity to assist and complement. These challenges are in the maintenance of renewable energy installations as Taiwan, like Australia, is still developing its maintenance expertise. With the new renewable energy skills centre of excellence being developed for CIT, the ACT is well equipped to cooperate in this area.

The centre of excellence will be developed in partnership with the Neoen-owned Hornsdale wind farm and its local partner Megawatt Capital. The centre of excellence will enable live monitoring of the 100-plus wind turbines at the farm, and the students will enjoy working with the large components of the turbines at the centre to ensure they are well prepared for the realities of the job.

I hope this delegation has paved the way for future cooperation in this technology and the growth of both Taiwan and Canberra's renewable energy expertise, creating further opportunities for trade students and highlighting the importance of the emerging renewable energy industries.

MR WALL (Brindabella), by leave: I begin by also acknowledging the presence in the chamber this morning of the 2015 youth delegation from Taiwan, accompanied by Mr Frank Lee, who graciously accompanied us on our delegation to Taiwan. I also note the presence of a representative from the Taiwan economic office, Dr David Lee. Thank you for joining us here today. I was very privileged to have joined you last night at the National Gallery for the sensational production you held. I even got dragged up on stage at one point. It was a sensational showcasing of the talents and

skills of your young people, so much the treasures of Taiwan. It sparked a few memories from our recent trip, and occurring over dinner time it made us most hungry.

With regards to the delegation I was privileged to have accompanied other members from this Assembly on, I thank the local Taipei Economic and Cultural Office for the generous offer of sponsoring our travel for this trip. It was a great eye-opener not just to see how Taiwan as a country and particularly Taipei as a city function but also as elected representatives of the ACT to have the opportunity to travel abroad, to get experiences from other cultures, jurisdictions and municipalities and to see what best practice is overseas, what opportunities exist for collaboration and to figure out how we can best apply that here in the ACT.

The trip was over four days and it crammed in a sensational list of meetings and engagements. The first day we were treated to the delights of the National Palace Museum in Taipei where a great deal of the national treasures are held. I guess it is their equivalent to our National Gallery and National Museum, but a lot of their artefacts date back some thousands of years, not hundreds of years. It was most humbling to be given a guided tour and an explanation of the cultural significance of many of these artefacts.

The first day continued on. We had a very constructive meeting with the Australian trade office in Taipei where we met with the head of mission, Ms Catherine Raper. We spoke about a lot of the economic factors with Taiwan being the eighth largest trading partner of Australia in its own right. It is important to recognise the importance of Taiwan to Australia and also to recognise the opportunities that exist given the knowledge economy we are developing in the ACT and the high-tech manufacturing capabilities in Taiwan.

Dr Bourke has spoken of some of the renewable energy opportunities that exist. I was a little disappointed that we did not get the opportunity to keep all of the high-tech manufacturing appointments we had made, but Mr White's health obviously took priority, and I am glad he is making a full recovery. The other disappointing portion of the trip was missing out on meeting with the corrections ministry and visiting one of their corrections facilities. Again, that coincided with an impromptu trip to the Hsinchu hospital where we saw the emergency department in action first hand. They operate a vastly different health system to what we are used to here in the ACT.

The portion of the trip which I found most eye-opening and which gave me the greatest insight into the national identity of Taiwan as a country was our day trip to Kinmen Island, which was the front line in the cold war between mainland China and Taiwan that occurred for many years. It was humbling to see the proximity of this island to mainland China and to learn of the great service of many Taiwanese men and women in their military to try and defend not just Kinmen Island but the democracy and the freedoms the country holds very dear. It was a great eye-opener and something I very much treasured and appreciated.

I conclude my remarks by again thanking the local Taipei Economic and Cultural Office and Mr Frank Lee who accompanied us on this trip. I thank him very much for his capable guidance and generosity.

Sitting suspended from 11.26 am to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

University of Canberra—public hospital

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in June 2015 you tabled six reports on the building of the University of Canberra public hospital including a functional brief, the service delivery plan and the service model but no costs. On 4 September 2015 I publicly called on the government to release the full costs of building the new hospital but there has been no response to date from the government. Minister, what is the full cost of building the University of Canberra public hospital?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hanson for his question and I refer him to my earlier answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why is the cost of building light rail publicly declared at \$783 million but the cost of building a hospital is hidden?

MR CORBELL: It is not hidden. The simple fact is that, as I have indicated to Mr Hanson and those opposite earlier, we are in the middle of a tender process for the delivery of the new University of Canberra public hospital. In relation to light rail, the figure that the government has released is the estimated capital cost, for the purposes of the business case, to deliver the first stage of capital metro.

But, in relation to the University of Canberra public hospital, it would be unwise, very unwise, to seek to precondition bidders who are currently having their bids assessed in relation to the University of Canberra public hospital. The government will disclose the cost of the project and it will do so once it has determined the outcome through the bidding process which is currently underway.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, when will construction of the hospital start and when will the hospital be opened?

MR CORBELL: The full details of the construction time line will be announced once the bidding process is completed and a preferred tender has been selected. But I can indicate to members that we expect construction to commence next year.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, are you concerned about comparing the infrastructure costs of new health facilities with the costs of light rail?

MR CORBELL: No, I am not.

Political parties—donations

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Capital Metro. Minister, when did you become aware of donations to the ACT branch of the Labor Party made by the Plenary Group?

MR CORBELL: I became aware of them in the lead-up to the Labor Party's declaration being made to the Electoral Commission.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, when did your agency, the Capital Metro Agency, become aware of donations to the ACT branch of the Labor Party made by the Plenary Group and what advice did your agency provide you?

MR CORBELL: The matter was not raised with the Capital Metro Agency and as far as I am aware the Capital Metro Agency only became aware of the matter when it was reported in the media.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, have all donations made by the Plenary Group to the ACT branch of the Labor Party now been refunded?

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you repeat that, Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Certainly, Madam Speaker. I asked: have all donations made by the Plenary Group to the ACT branch of the Labor Party now been refunded?

Mr Corbell: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, these matters relate to the activities of the ACT Labor Party, not to my responsibilities as Minister for Capital Metro.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is that a statement or a point of clarification?

Mr Corbell: I am seeking your ruling, Madam Speaker, insofar as I believe the question to be out of order. The question—

MADAM SPEAKER: I think you need to say it if you think the question is out of order.

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am seeking your ruling that this question is, indeed, out of order as it relates to matters that are the responsibility of the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party, not to my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Capital Metro.

MADAM SPEAKER: If you thought the line of questioning was out of order, you might have taken it up when Mr Coe asked the first question. Have you got—

Mr Corbell: On that, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, this is not a conversation. You asked for a ruling and—

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker—

Mr Corbell: I am seeking your ruling, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe had the call because Mr Coe had stood, I presume to make a point of order.

Mr Coe: Yes, Madam Speaker. In response to Mr Corbell's point of order, it is worth noting, of course, that there is a ministerial code of conduct which specifically mentions any conflicts of interest. Further to this, the Capital Metro Agency is spending a huge amount of money on probity and governance advice. With that in mind, I think it is entirely appropriate that the Minister for Capital Metro be across these issues.

Mr Corbell: On the point of order, if I may, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: This will be the last point made on the point of order before I continue to give my ruling.

Mr Corbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The question was quite explicit: it asked me what actions the ACT Labor Party had undertaken in relation to any refund of donations made to it. There was no reference to me and my responsibilities as Minister for Capital Metro. There was no reference in relation to any code of conduct or probity matters in relation to the administration of the Capital Metro Agency. It was strictly and solely about the conduct of the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party. I cannot as the relevant portfolio minister for capital metro answer questions about the conduct of the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party.

MADAM SPEAKER: The standing orders allow for questions to be asked about things which arise out of the original question or out of subsequent questions and the answers given. The original question was about when Mr Corbell, as Minister for Capital Metro, became aware of donations, when did the agency become aware of donations, and the follow-on question was: have the donations been repaid?

If there was an issue about donations—because there seems to have been a donation to the Labor Party—where the minister thought the questioning was out of order, he should have raised it when the initial question was asked. As Mr Coe has rightly pointed out, there are issues relating to conflicts of interest in codes of conduct in the continuing resolution of the Legislative Assembly and in the ministerial code of conduct, and there are issues relating to probity. I will allow the question.

MR CORBELL: Madam Speaker, I refer the member to the comments made by the secretary of the ACT branch of the Australian Labor Party in relation to these matters.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, do you feel that the bidding process for light rail has now been compromised?

MR CORBELL: Apart from it probably asking for an expression of opinion, I will nevertheless take the question, and the answer is no.

Cabinet—meetings

MS FITZHARRIS: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you update the Assembly on the ACT government's recent pop-up cabinet in Woden?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Fitzharris for the question. Indeed, it was a great pleasure for cabinet members to be able to hold a couple of days of meetings and events in the Woden town centre, in the Phillip business district and in areas around Woden, Weston Creek and Molonglo earlier this month. Cabinet hosted a business forum and a community services roundtable, visited a local school, toured the hospital and met with local residents in a series of one-on-one meetings. We also had a stand at Westfield Woden and had the opportunity to engage with members of the community throughout the few days we were popping up in Woden.

We discussed a range of issues including the future of higher education provision in Woden, infrastructure upgrades, health care, investing in the town centre precinct, child protection issues, and community facility and community service issues. We met with business owners in Westfield and we also visited a number of businesses in the Phillip services district, which was kindly facilitated by Robert Issell from the Phillip business community. It was a little wet on the Thursday morning but we did undertake a walking tour of the Phillip business district and had the opportunity to meet a number of small business owners in the precinct.

We are committed to supporting our local businesses in town centres and local shopping centres, and the business forum the government held was an excellent way to learn more about the issues in the Woden-Phillip service area in particular. We look forward to being able to resolve a number of the specific issues that were raised with government.

Similarly the community services roundtable helped open a strong dialogue between the government and community service providers in the Woden, Weston Creek, Molonglo region. We are committed to continuing to provide support for community sector organisations.

So it was an informative and interesting few days in Woden, and the response from the community was, indeed, very positive. It was a great pleasure to be able to discuss a range of important issues about the future of the Woden town centre in particular. We look forward to continuing this method of community engagement in other parts of Canberra in the months ahead.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Chief Minister, what were some of the outcomes from the Woden business forum?

MR BARR: There was a range of topics raised during the business forum, particularly in relation to the services trade area, the need to encourage more parking turnover and to prevent commuters from parking in that business area. The renewal of the town centre and existing urban renewal projects in the area were also discussed. We had some quite detailed discussions about the next phase of upgrades for the Woden bus interchange, the new pedestrian and bicycle connections that will better link Woden's public spaces to commercial and community activity.

The forum also discussed opportunities that existed to shape the Woden precinct into a health services hub, leveraging off the hospital and other health services that already exist and using this to attract new businesses into the area.

There was also a discussion of the need to strike the right balance in demographics residing in or near the town centre, with particular support for retirees and opportunities for aged care. We discussed the upgrade of community facilities and assets in Woden and ways the government can help to introduce a greater level of mixed use activity into the services trade area to encourage more business activity in that precinct.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, what has the ACT government done to address the concerns raised by local businesses at the Woden business forum?

MR BARR: I was very pleased to be able to discuss a range of local infrastructure upgrades that the government will be supporting in the Woden-Phillip areas, particularly in relation to a range of municipal service outcomes. This year's budget delivers more frequent mowing, weed control, tree maintenance and cleaning of bus stops, lakes and ponds in the Woden area. The extra mowing budget will include a surge mowing capacity so that high visibility and high use areas like our major parks and arterial roads in and around Woden get an extra mow if and when they need it. It will also allow more weed removal on road verges, median strips and cycle paths.

We also looked at a range of footpaths, shopfronts and pedestrian crossings within the Phillip services area as part of the walking tour. Minister Rattenbury, through the TAMS Directorate, will be responding to a range of specific issues that were outlined during the walking tour.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, beyond your entourage and the media, how many local Woden residents attended your pop-up cabinet?

MR BARR: Around 100 people attended various events in the town centre. We had ministers meeting with individual constituents. Probably about 80 students were

engaged in an event at the Hughes Primary School to celebrate Indigenous Literacy Day. There would have been about 20 business owners who accompanied us or we met with on the walking tour in Phillip. The business roundtable had around a dozen attendees and the community services one a similar number—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, a point of order on relevance. My supplementary was quite specific. I asked how many local Woden residents visited the pop-up cabinet, not how many school kids were roped into this.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think a school student is quite legitimately a member of the electorate. I call Mr Barr to answer the question.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think in total several hundred local residents were engaged—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: in various activities, as expected. Those opposite may interject and may be cynical about community engagement. We know they like to hide away and plot over leadership changes. We know all about that. They are much more comfortable in the backroom knifing leaders.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: That is the preferred position.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Barr. If you cannot be relevant to the question, I will sit you down. A question without notice, Mr Smyth.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear Mr Smyth.

ACT Emergency Services Agency—reform

MR SMYTH: My question is to the minister for emergency services. Minister, in an ESA motion debate on 12 August this year you noted:

The strategic reform agenda ... will support the ESA to continue as a high performing emergency services organisation, indeed among the best in Australia, and will position it to best meet the challenges of the years ahead.

Minister, however, on 22 August this year the Transport Workers Union ACT delegate noted:

Members are reporting to me there's a wide-held belief that nothing has changed—

One could insert the words “for the better”—

in fact people feel more uncomfortable than before ... are frustrated and some are more fearful than before, they think things have actually gotten worse and they're not happy with the way things have changed.

Minister, if the reforms you are overseeing are so successful, why has the union made such comments on the public notice?

MS BURCH: I do thank Mr Smyth for his question. The strategic reform agenda will position the ESA to be a leading agency in this nation to respond to emergency services. I have said that and everyone within ESA is committed to that. Whilst Mr Smyth will make comments about some commentary of the TWU, I continue to meet with delegates from the TWU and we have quite an open conversation.

There is rightly a sense of urgency to see that change is afoot but we also recognise that change takes time. There is a very clear map and path about that change and the responsibilities about where that sits. An expert in the field, David Place, visits Canberra from South Australia on a regular basis as part of that oversight committee. We continue to positive change. We will get there.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, the ESA has characterised the proposed reforms as a positive change. Do you consider doing nothing as positive change?

MS BURCH: Mr Smyth could not be more wrong. Every official within ESA is working towards a positive change.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, when will these reform initiatives happen? If they have already commenced, why is it that workers feel that nothing has been done?

MS BURCH: I have a level of disappointment that the Canberra Liberals want to continue to talk down the ESA. In the conversations I had with the delegates, as I said, they were impatient perhaps with the timeliness of the change, but they can see my absolute determination and that of the commissioner to effect a positive change.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what plans for further reform initiatives do you have for the ACT Ambulance Service before the end of this calendar year?

MS BURCH: The strategic reform agenda applies the reform plan across the ESA but the blueprint for change is very clear in the directions and the activities for ACTAS.

Schools—autism

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, in the official communique circulated last week outlining the results of the 5½-month inquiry, it was acknowledged that an unknown number of unknown staff in the central office of the education directorate had known about the construction of the cage for nine school days. What evidence is there that those unnamed directorate staff did not know earlier about the structure?

MS BURCH: Mr Doszpot is referring, I am hoping, to the statement that is available publicly on the Education and Training Directorate's website and also to the statements made by the director-general last week.

The independent investigation did find that there was some knowledge within different areas of the directorate before I became aware of it on Friday the 27th, and then the following week when I became very clear about what this structure was. The investigation was made. The director-general has responded to that and has taken appropriate action.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, did the review suggest any recourse for directorate staff?

MS BURCH: The independent investigation was on the activities around the decision-maker for that structure. It was very clear that there was one person who was responsible. That was the finding of the investigation. The finding has been accepted by the person that the complaint was about—it was the principal. The principal has accepted responsibility for her decision to put that structure into a school. The director-general will deal with other matters, as she ought.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, given it was an independent review, what made it independent?

MS BURCH: Because it was conducted by an independent investigator in Shared Services at arm's length from my office and from the director-general.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, who was the independent reviewer?

MS BURCH: I do not think it is good policy to put out the name of the independent officer.

Energy—wind

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the progress of the three successful wind farm projects that were announced as the winners of the first wind auction earlier this year?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his question. Yes, I can confirm that we are seeing significant progress in the development of the first of three large-scale wind farms for the ACT, delivering 200 megawatts of renewable energy generation for our city—enough to meet the electricity needs of over 80,000 Canberra households.

I am pleased to say that all three wind farms have now achieved what is known as financial close—that is, they have secured the finance necessary from their banks and other financiers to deliver these projects. The Ararat Wind Farm achieved financial close in June this year. Construction of the Coonooner Bridge Wind Farm, being developed by Canberra-based company Windlab, started in June this year. Construction of all three wind farms is now on track and is expected to be completed early to mid-2016.

This is very good news for the government's 90 per cent renewable energy target. Of course, it will be bolstered with the Chief Minister's announcement that we will move to a 100 per cent renewable energy target in the coming months. As a result, we are seeing significant investment in our city and in our community from these projects.

Not only are we significantly reducing the carbon intensity of the ACT economy and therefore reducing our city's greenhouse gas emissions; we are also seeing jobs and investment in our local community. For example, the Windlab project itself is supporting the growth of the Canberra-based start up Windlab right here in our city. They estimate that growth in their business as a result of their success in the wind auction process will see salaries and on-costs fed back into the ACT economy worth over \$240 million to our economy.

In addition, we will see a French-based company, Neoen, which is developing the Hornsdale project, grow its investment in our city through the \$7 million investment in the Canberra Institute of Technology—a major investment in one of our key skills training centres. At the same time, it has now established its Asia-Pacific wind business here in the ACT. That is a very important commitment of growth in the renewable energy sector here in the ACT.

This is good news. It shows that the government's renewable energy policies are working. It shows that the projects are being delivered and it shows that our city is getting the investment in jobs and economic activity right here in the ACT as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you also update the Assembly on the other actions the government is taking to achieve the renewable energy target?

MR CORBELL: I thank Dr Bourke for his supplementary. Yes, in addition to the work that is being undertaken through the wind farm projects that I have just mentioned we are investing significantly in growing solar here in the ACT. We now have over 50 megawatts of renewable energy generation from solar here in the ACT, and that is a combination of the operational Royalla solar project and also over 30 megawatts of rooftop solar that has been installed in over 10,000 households across the ACT—half of that without any feed-in tariff support. That is a very, very positive development for our city.

Of course, the government continues to roll out its initiatives to meet our 90 per cent renewable energy target. We have two other large-scale solar projects that are close to commencing their construction phases. That is a very welcome development as well. That will see a further 20 megawatts delivered through those two projects. And there are the government's initiatives in terms of supporting further rounds of wind energy generation through a wind auction process which is currently underway and the very positive response that the government received from a very large number of companies with individual proposals for the 50 megawatts of next generation solar with storage.

Combined, we are showing Australia what can be realised when it comes to investment in renewable energy generation. We are showing that we can make the shift to a low carbon future, that we can do it in a very affordable way, in a very timely and effective way, with a mechanism that the market understands and at the same time securing jobs and investment in our city. These are the policies we need for our city's future. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how is the ACT tracking to meet the renewable energy target by 2020?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary. How are we tracking? From 2017 more than a quarter of Canberra's total electricity supply will be sourced from the three wind farms selected through the first wind auction process—so more than a quarter just from those three wind projects. That is enough electricity to power up to 106,000 Canberra homes. It results in a 580,000 tonne reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions each and every year, which is the equivalent of taking more than 157,000 cars off the road annually.

There are people in this chamber and elsewhere who said it could not be done and who said we could not drive down our emissions in the manner set in the target in the greenhouse gas legislation. They said it could not be done. They said it was not possible. We are showing it is possible. We are demonstrating that this can be done, and we are doing it in a way which is affordable and achievable and which is seeing investment in jobs and investment in the local economy as well—a great win for our city.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, how will the ACT economy benefit from continued investment in renewable energy?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Fitzharris for her supplementary. In addition of course to the benefits I have talked about in relation to, say, the local Canberra company Windlab, it is worth highlighting that over the last four years renewable energy jobs in Canberra have grown by over 400 per cent—and that is at a time when, due to the hostility of the Liberal Party nationally, jobs in renewable energy fell nationally across the economy. So we are growing investment in jobs for the renewable energy sector.

Let me give you just one example: the Power Saving Centre here in Canberra. It is a local commercial and residential solar installation business. It has grown its work force from two to 22 in less than two years. That is just a great example of that growth in the renewable energy sector here in the ACT. I have talked about the investments being made by Windlab. They will grow their workforce from around 20 to 80 over the period of the feed-in tariff entitlement for them, their wind farm project.

The French company, Neoen, that I mentioned earlier have established their Asia-Pacific wind business here in the ACT. They are going to be training their staff for the maintenance of wind farm projects here in the ACT. Those students are going to be staying here in the ACT, they are going to be spending money here in the ACT and they are going to be bringing more business to the ACT as a result. So these are great outcomes for our city and they demonstrate what can be realised through effective policy.

We have also seen a number of other companies sign on to support the government's renewable energy industry development strategy, which I released earlier this year. Companies like Siemens, like General Electric, like Vestas, are all investing and committing to this policy as well. (*Time expired.*)

Schools—autism

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, did any specialist staff of the directorate visit the school in question whilst the cage was in place?

MS BURCH: I refer to the information that is available online on that. The school had access to the NSET team. Again, without going back through that, the school had access to the NSET team. The NSET team was aware of the challenging behaviours of this young one, but the principal herself did not utilise or access the full supports that were available to her. I find this structure to be completely and absolutely unacceptable. I said that in April, I said it in May, June, July, August and September, and I will continue to say it.

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, the specific question was: did any specialist staff of the directorate visit the school in question whilst the cage was in place. It is not whether they had access to the specialist staff but whether specialist staff did, in fact, attend the school during that period.

MADAM SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order and ask the minister to be directly relevant to the question.

MS BURCH: Madam Speaker, I am answering the question in that the NSET team regularly provides support to this school and other schools in the network, but this decision was that of the principal alone.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: The question, as Mr Coe outlined on relevance, remains, Madam Speaker. The question is whether the staff visited, and the minister is refusing to answer that question. She is refusing to be relevant, and I ask that she be directly relevant. It is a simple yes or no, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I asked the minister to be directly relevant. She repeated herself, but I do not know that she was directly relevant. I cannot hold her down and make her answer the question in the way Mr Hanson or Mr Wall might like. Have you finished your answer to the question, minister?

MS BURCH: Yes, I have.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, did any specialist staff member visit a classroom which adjoins the room in which the cage was placed between 10 March and 27 March this year?

MS BURCH: I really am not trying to be evasive, although I know you will go into a chorus of laughing over there. There were members of an NSET team that visit schools. There were also teachers at that school, clearly, that sighted that structure and did not respond accordingly. If you want to refer to them as specialist teachers, you may. Clearly, the principal alone made the decision. There were others within that school—and this remains a very sad point for me—that did not respond accordingly. That is a failure of their behaviour and they will be dealt with.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, did the school in question request specialist staff support for the student prior to the construction of the cage?

MS BURCH: As I understand it, there was conversation between the school and the NSET team but in the end the principal did not exhaust and seek the level of advice that they ought to have in determining to put this structure in the place. Why that is so, I do not know. I fail to understand how you would not access the resources there.

The investigation found that the principal themselves made that decision and did not escalate this to the point that—the unanswered question is: how would an experienced principal put this into place? That is the unanswered question. The principal themselves have said that they made that decision.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, do any specialist staff routinely visit the classroom in which the cage was in place?

MS BURCH: Again, specialist staff routinely visit all our schools, and there would have been teaching staff at that school that were aware of that structure between the 10th and the 27th, when it was dismantled. That fact is undisputed; it is on the public record on the Education and Training Directorate's website. Is that a disappointment to us? Absolutely. Will those officials be counselled? Absolutely.

Schools—autism

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Minister, was there a policy in place for how teachers were to administer the use of the cage which was the subject of the recent inquiry? If so, was the policy written with the support or guidance of the directorate?

MS BURCH: There was no input from the directorate into the structure or use of that space.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how can an inquiry that takes 5½ months to conclude arrive at this conclusion that the principal acted alone and is totally responsible for this structure?

MS BURCH: It arrived at that decision because that was the finding of the independent investigation. That is the finding that was accepted, absolutely accepted, by the principal. Indeed, if you listen to the other commentary of the AEU, they accept the findings. They accept those findings as well.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, how certain can you be that the structure was used only once, given there is a photo of a student in the cage?

MS BURCH: Through the investigation it was determined that the structure was used once. I am aware now, though, that a photo has appeared. It has appeared. I am on record to say that I am immensely disappointed about those photos being published. I have spent five months not wanting them out in the public arena—on record, and I will say it again and continually—thinking of the family involved in not wanting to have those images public. It is a fine line. I accept there are many in the community that might think seeing that structure has a place. I personally do not think that.

Once I saw that photo I asked for information, and the structure was used once to manage the child's behaviour. But the structure was also accessed by kids in the class moving in and out. As I also understand, within that freedom of movement, perhaps there was an image taken to construct a story book. I go back to your question around the policy. This is where there were some story books. That is a normal, traditional part of therapy when a child needs to point to visual cues about calming and other behavioural management, and that that could have been used for that.

Do I find it appropriate? Absolutely not. Am I enjoying standing here saying that this is ACT education and training at its finest? Absolutely not. Not since April have I thought that any part of this was acceptable in any way, shape or form, and I will continue to hold that absolute horror, dismay, disgust and disappointment in the principal and anyone else who saw that and thought that that was in any way acceptable.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, was the fact that a photo or photos were available part of the outcome of the inquiry?

MS BURCH: How this inquiry came to my attention is that there was a photo and complaints to the Human Rights Commission. That is how I became involved. I became involved too late because the structure had already been in place for 17 days. So, clearly, there are photos. There were photos identified within the investigation. People were aware of photos. I have seen one image and can I say that any image that I have seen published is not the same image that I have seen. So there are multiple photos, and I find that disturbing on any and all levels. I find it completely unacceptable on any and all levels. I struggle to understand how a principal of such experience came to this decision, but that is the fact. That is what it is, sadly.

Industrial relations—public holidays

MS PORTER: My question through you, Madam Speaker, is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. Minister, following the announcement that Easter Sunday will become a public holiday can you outline to the Assembly the benefits this will bring for workers in the ACT?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Porter for her question and her interest in workers across the territory. The Australian labour market has undergone a period of significant change. For many workers, irregular hours and weekend work has become the norm. Sundays have increasingly become a working day for many employees, particularly in the retail, hospitality and transport sectors.

Members may be aware that I have been consulting with the community about public holidays and the treatment of Easter Sunday for several months. Many of the people that I have spoken with were surprised to learn that Easter Sunday is not already a public holiday. I suspect that the large number of people who work in or operate businesses that close on Sunday would be similarly surprised.

Historically, Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Easter Monday have been public holidays but Easter Sunday has not. This is because the origins of our current public holiday laws predate the liberalisation of Sunday trading when it was assumed that businesses would not be conducted on a Sunday. Unfortunately our industrial relations laws have not kept up with our changing work patterns.

The ACT government values the members of our community who work on weekends. Their contributions are integral to the growing value of our visitor community and making Canberra the lively, cosmopolitan city that it has become. We also acknowledge the sacrifices made by weekend workers, families and friends who miss out on time spent together relaxing with their loved ones.

By legislating to make Easter Sunday a public holiday we will be taking action to ensure that the territory's industrial relations system stays in step with contemporary work practices. I firmly believe that people who work on days of community significance should be able to unite as families or, if not, they should be properly compensated for the time they spend away from family on important occasions.

In 2009 Professor Joellen Riley was engaged by the New South Wales government to conduct a review of the Banks and Bank Holidays Act 1912 with a view to recommending measures for modernisation of the recognition of public holidays in that state. Importantly, her work informed the New South Wales government that the deferral of certain public holidays to days other than the significant day itself restricted the ability of Australians as working citizens and members of families and communities to enjoy the celebration of community holidays.

Particular times of year permit people, especially those whose families are separated by distance, to join together, and this is particularly true at Easter. The health and social wellbeing of people, supported by their ability to maintain family connections, was a key point that the ACT government considered in working to make Easter Sunday a public holiday.

Making Easter Sunday a public holiday will mean that holiday penalty rates and other entitlements under the applicable enterprise agreements will apply. Furthermore, workers will have the option to exercise their right under the Fair Work Act to refuse to work and to be paid if they are absent as a result of refusing to work on Easter Sunday. If a worker decides to give up a public holiday, then it is fair and right that they should be paid at the appropriate penalty rate.

Declaring Easter Sunday a public holiday responds to the growing community concern that Easter is a significant and protracted holiday period akin to Christmas and New Year's Day and it is important that public holiday entitlements be afforded to workers during these periods. Interestingly, the Victorian government has gazetted Easter Sunday a public holiday from 2016.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, why is it important that penalty rates for workers are protected?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Porter for the supplementary question. The importance of penalty rates cannot be overstated. Penalty rates are an inseparable part of our collective value of a fair go and provide an essential bulwark against labour exploitation. Penalty rates fairly compensate workers for the effect that working

unsocial hours has on social, family and general wellbeing. For the majority of Australians, Sunday exists as a day of relaxation and socialising, with 71 per cent of Australians working Monday to Friday only. As such, the overwhelming majority of Australians rely on weekend workers to serve them at restaurants, supermarkets, cafes and events during their time of social and community recreation—the very same recreation that weekend workers of course have to give up

Penalty rates are also good for the economy. They increase the pay of the lowest paid workers to buy basic necessities, and every extra dollar earned puts money back into the economy at a greater rate than someone on a higher income.

There have been several unsuccessful attempts to remove penalty rates from awards, and the addition of public holidays in some years will inevitably encounter a level of opposition. The Productivity Commission has recently released its draft review of the Fair Work Act 2009 for comment by stakeholders. Among other things, it recommends reducing Sunday penalty rates that are not part of overtime or shift work to Saturday rates in the hospitality, entertainment, retail, restaurant and cafe sectors.

I have serious concerns about this recommendation, as well as a number of others. This government will always stand up for our workers, whether they be public servants from the community sector, the construction industry or hospitality and retail. We will also stand up for our community and families, and this is why the government will always remain proactive in the protection of workers rights.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: Minister, what other measures is the ACT government working on to improve benefits for workers?

MR GENTLEMAN: This government is strongly committed to ensuring the territory's industrial relations framework provides for safe, healthy, fair and equitable workplaces and employment arrangements.

One of the things that we are currently working on is extending the coverage of the territory's portable long service leave scheme to also include aged care and waste disposal workers. Portable long service leave schemes help to ensure that workers in industries where there is a high degree of staff turnover may still receive the benefit of long service leave.

The scheme responds to the fluidity of the modern-day Australian workforce. It recognises that workers very often do not stay in the same job for their whole working life but nonetheless remain committed to their professions, their careers and their industry. It supports workers who are willing to commit to the same industry and the benefits that longer-term commitment brings to that industry as well.

When it comes to choice of moving between employers to advance their career opportunities, workers covered by portable long service leave schemes know that they can retain continuity of their entitlement. They can plan their future knowing that they will not be disadvantaged, as would have been the case if the long service leave scheme was not portable.

There has been a portable long service leave scheme in existence in the ACT since 1981. It commenced with the building and construction industry. In 2000 the contract cleaning industry was added, followed by the community sector industry in 2010 and, most recently, the contract security industry in 2013. Presently there are 2,033 employers and 26,400 workers registered. The government is working closely with unions, employers, community groups and industry associations to design the extension of the existing scheme to the aged care and waste removal sectors.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, how is the ACT government working with employee groups to improve outcomes for workers in the ACT?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Dr Bourke for his interest in workers across the territory. Stable and high performing industrial relations frameworks are characterised by meaningful consultation and engagement between government, employers, workers and unions. Officials in my department are working closely with unions on a range of initiatives designed to assist workers. For example, the government is a signatory to the Australian fair work health and safety strategy, which promotes a collaborative tripartite approach to achieving reductions in workplace injury and fatality. These principles underpin how we have gone about implementing the recommendations the getting home safely inquiry into construction industry safety. In particular, unions have worked closely with WorkSafe ACT to design and deliver a range of training, education and awareness-raising services to industry.

I am pleased to say that this work is paying dividends. An actuarial review commissioned by the government has shown that lost time injuries in the ACT construction industry reduced by about one-third in the first year after our acceptance of the getting home safely recommendations. Significantly, this was off the back of several years of deteriorating safety performance.

In the field of injury management, we are working closely with unions on designing a new workers compensation scheme to meet the needs of the ACT public sector workforce. The negotiations have been extremely constructive and will help to produce a scheme that drives improved injury prevention and earlier safe return to productive employment for our workers.

Unions are also strongly represented on the ACT Work Safety Council. The council is a ministerial advisory council that specialises in work safety and workers compensation. The council is currently considering a range of important worker protection initiatives, including the design of a national injury insurance scheme, to provide lifetime care and support for catastrophically injured workers and also improvements to their benefits. *(Time expired.)*

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

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Acting Speaker—Instrument of Appointment, pursuant to standing order 6A—Assistant Speaker Lawder (9 September 2015), dated 7 September 2015.

Standing order 191—Amendments to the Road Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, dated 17 August 2015.

Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act, pursuant to subsection 20(2)—Independent Reviewer—Report for the period 1 January to 30 June 2015, dated 24 August 2015, prepared by Professor Dennis Pearce.

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

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

Long-term contracts:

Anita Hargreaves, dated 26 August 2015.

Clint Peters, dated 5 August 2015.

David Collett, dated 28 August 2015.

David Dawes, dated 25 August 2015.

Emily Springett, dated 5 August 2015.

Jacinta Evans, dated 14 August 2015.

Kirsten Thompson, dated 17 August 2015.

Mark Collis, dated 28 August 2015.

Short-term contracts:

David Jones, dated 7 and 12 August 2015.

David Morgan, dated 26 August 2015.

Gary Wright, dated 19 August 2015.

Grant Kennealy, dated 17 and 19 August 2015.

Kaaren Blom, dated 3 and 5 August 2015.

Leanne Wright, dated 11 and 12 August 2015.

Leesha Pitt, dated 27 and 28 August 2015.

Philip Canham, dated 21 and 25 August 2015.

Rhonda Maher, dated 24 and 26 August 2015.

Richard Baumgart, dated 21 and 25 August 2015.

Samantha Tyler, dated 7 and 12 August 2015.

Contract variations:

Austin Kenney, dated 24 and 26 August 2015.

Benjamin Ponton, dated 13 and 14 August 2015.

Christine Murray, dated 31 July and 5 August 2015.

Christopher Reynolds, dated 30 June and 12 August 2015.

Elizabeth Lopa, dated 24 and 26 August 2015.

Gordon Elliot, dated 20 and 25 August 2015.

Helen Pappas, dated 21 and 26 August 2015.

John Wynants, dated 19 and 25 August 2015.

Michael Trushell, dated 21 and 25 August 2015.

Nicholas Holt, dated 11 and 26 August 2015.

Paul Lewis, dated 10 and 17 August 2015.

Paul Peters, dated 24 and 26 August 2015.

Phillip Perram, dated 25 and 26 August 2015.

Yu-Lan Chan, dated 17 August 2015.

Auditor-General's report No 6 of 2015—government response Paper and statement by minister

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

Auditor-General's Act, pursuant to subsection 17(6)—Auditor-General's Report No 6/2015—Bulk Water Alliance—Government response.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I am pleased to present the government's response to the Auditor-General's report No 6 of 2015 on the Bulk Water Alliance. An audit of ACTEW's water infrastructure projects, including the enlarged Cotter Dam, the Murrumbidgee to Googong pipeline and the Googong Dam spillway, was first identified in the Auditor-General's 2013-14 performance audit program. It was subsequently determined that the audit should also investigate a public interest disclosure lodged in August 2013 which raised concerns with the management of the three large water security projects under the Bulk Water Alliance and with the reporting of the increasing costs of the enlarged Cotter Dam to the ACT community.

The audit report does not contain any recommendations. The key objective of the audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of ACTEW's management of its Bulk Water Alliance and the delivery of the associated infrastructure projects. The audit considered the governance and administrative arrangements of the Bulk Water Alliance, how these assisted ACTEW to manage its financial and performance risks in the delivery of the significant infrastructure and the various costs and time taken to complete each of the projects.

The report concluded that it was effective and appropriate for ACTEW to establish the Bulk Water Alliance to deliver these major infrastructure projects. Of note, the report found the roles and responsibilities for the Bulk Water Alliance, including those of

ACTEW as owner, were clearly and appropriately articulated in the alliance agreement. The alliance established a comprehensive set of policies and procedures documents to help guide the management and administration of the projects. ACTEW implemented effective monitoring and oversight arrangements to ensure it received regular information on the progress and fulfilments of the alliance and its projects.

The report did find, though, that the optimistic and ambitious production targets had resulted in unrealistic expectations for the cost and time lines of the enlarged Cotter Dam project. It also considered some aspects of the alliance process could have been better managed. The audit acknowledged there were extenuating circumstances beyond the control of management that increased certain costs and delayed the completion of the enlarged Cotter Dam. These factors included significant periods of bad weather and three major flood events, including a one-in-100-year flood event and the discovery of a geological fault.

The government notes the findings of the audit, which illustrate the extent of the challenges and inherent risks associated with the planning, preparation, design and construction of large and complex major infrastructure projects. It is significant to note that the audit report found no evidence to suggest that ACTEW or the government intentionally misled or deceived the public in reporting changes to the costs of the enlarged Cotter Dam during the planning and construction phases. Icon Water, formerly ACTEW, has accepted the findings of the report, which provide valuable lessons for each of the alliance partners to take forward.

In closing, I note that all three major water security projects have been successfully completed, and the ACT community now has a significantly improved water storage capacity that provides security against future climate change impacts. With this enhanced capacity, the ACT can avoid resorting to severe water restrictions during prolonged droughts. I commend the government's response to members.

Auditor-General's report No 7 of 2015—government response Paper and statement by minister

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

Auditor-General's Act, pursuant to subsection 17(6)—Auditor-General's Report No 7/2015—Sale of ACTTAB—Government response.

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

Leave granted.

MR BARR: On 17 June 2014, the Select Committee on Estimates recommended that the Legislative Assembly refer the sale process of ACTTAB Ltd to the ACT Auditor-General to consider a review of the sale. In September 2014 the Auditor-General announced her decision to conduct a performance audit on the sale of ACTTAB.

The objective of the audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the probity of the sale of ACTTAB, including whether there was appropriate consideration and analysis of the bids received from potential purchasers against all relevant legislative, policy, financial and other requirements or factors. The audit examined all aspects of the sale, including the planning, administration and communication processes associated with the sale. The audit examined the compliance of the sale process with ACT government procurement legislation and policies associated with the sale of public assets.

The report confirmed what we already knew, which is that the sale price of \$105.5 million was a very good result for the territory, especially as this price far exceeded expectations. The review also confirmed that all the sale objectives were achieved.

A particular matter arising in the report was whether the sale was subject to the Government Procurement Act 2001. The government notes the report puts forward particular views on how the sale process should have been undertaken. These views are very different from the legal, technical and sales advice that the government relied upon during the conduct of the sale.

Despite the outstanding success of the sale, the report has suggested there was a lack of probity and transparency during the first stage of the process, in which expressions of interest were invited. With respect to the Auditor-General, the government does not agree with this finding. While the report finds that the provisions of the Government Procurement Act should have been followed, the government maintains its position that the act did not apply to the sale, as confirmed in legal advice provided to the ACT government by the ACT Government Solicitor's office. The government does not consider that the probity of the sale process was affected by the non-application of that act.

The sale was informed by expert legal and commercial advisers, was subject to strict probity and appropriate management arrangements and followed frameworks commonly used in government business sales in other jurisdictions. Risks were identified and managed. Key decisions and their underlying reasons were clearly documented.

The government is concerned about suggestions in the audit report regarding the adequacy and transparency of the process for evaluating the five initial bids. In particular, the government does not agree with the suggestion that the evaluation of the operational capacity and criteria inappropriately excluded three of the interested parties.

To put the sales process in context, five applicants responded to the call for expressions of interest. The relative merits of each applicant were carefully assessed by the sale project team, with significant input from the expert sales adviser, against a number of clearly documented eligibility criteria. Three of the interested parties were excluded at the expression of interest stage based on legal advice provided to the project team and the steering committee. These parties were excluded on the grounds that their proposed plans to operate a totalisator would not allow them to qualify for a totalisator licence.

The call for expressions of interest clearly stated that applicants “must demonstrate that they currently have the ability or a plan to successfully operate a wagering business, including the pari-mutuel pooling arrangements, since existing pooling arrangements may or may not continue post the sale process.”

The conclusion drawn by the audit report was that the operational capacity criteria inappropriately excluded interested parties from further consideration. The audit report appears to have taken the view that a future plan, albeit without any guarantee of a licence, should have been taken as sufficient compliance with the criterion. The government strongly disagrees with this proposition. The government considers it would have been contrary to commercial good sense to permit an applicant, who did not have a realistic prospect of obtaining a licence to proceed to the competitive bidding stage.

As the smallest TAB in the country, ACTTAB could not operate a totalisator without access to a large pari-mutuel betting pool. This had obvious indications for the risk and the value of owning ACTTAB, which was highly dependent on the ability of the owner to have access to not only a totalisator system but also an adequate betting pool. This meant it would have been inappropriate and futile to allow through to the next stage any expressions of interest that did not provide a realistic and credible plan to operate a totalisator.

The government notes that the audit report raised no issues about the significantly more involved and complex elements of the ACTTAB sale process, which included the indicative bid, due diligence, final offer and contract execution stages.

In closing, I can advise in relation to the recommendation contained in the audit report on procurement processes that the government regularly reviews its procurement processes in consultation with stakeholders. If necessary, amendments will be made to procurement policies, procedures and processes. I commend the government’s response to members.

Paper

Mr Corbell presented the following paper:

Gene Technology Act, pursuant to subsection 136A(3)—Operations of the Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly report—1 January to 31 March 2015, dated 10 June 2015.

AP2: a new climate change strategy and action plan for the Australian Capital Territory—government response Paper and statement by minister

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Capital Metro): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

AP2: A new climate change strategy and action plan for the Australian Capital Territory—Implementation status report, prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment—Government response.

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

Leave granted.

MR CORBELL: Today I am tabling the government's response to the implementation status report, a report on the implementation of *Action plan 2: a new climate change strategy and action plan for the ACT*. This report was prepared by the office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. The ACT's second strategy action plan to address and act on climate change in the territory, AP2, was released in October 2012. Through AP2, the government requested that the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment prepare periodic reports on its ongoing implementation and our progress towards the emission reduction targets established in the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act 2010.

These reports are to answer a series of questions to enable the government to determine the overall success of the actions in AP2 in achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions or in adapting to a changing climate. These questions included how we are tracking against sector greenhouse gas reduction targets, what are the implications for developments in climate change science, how fit for purpose are the territory's climate change adaptation policies, how do the territory's targets and actions stand in relation to developments at a national and international level, and what new opportunities or challenges have emerged. These implementation status reports are to be delivered at regular intervals in 2014, 2017 and finally in 2020.

In March this year the commissioner, Mr Neil, and I joined together to release the first implementation status report. The government committed to responding to that, and the report I have tabled today satisfies that commitment.

The implementation status report presented the government with a total of 15 challenges and opportunities to improve climate change mitigation and adaptation activities. The government is already working on implementing many of these. For example, the report noted difficulties in determining the effectiveness of climate change mitigation actions due to the two-year delay in greenhouse gas emissions reporting.

In response to this, earlier this year I released an interim greenhouse gas inventory covering the 2012-13 and 2013-14 reporting periods. Until that time the ACT greenhouse gas inventory was prepared for a reporting period two years in arrears. This was due to some of the data contributing to the inventory being sourced from the Australian government's national inventory report, which is also produced with a two-year delay.

From this year, therefore, the ACT government will produce an up-to-date inventory report in September covering the previous financial year. By doing this, we will ensure greater transparency and accountability in emissions reporting and will have a substantially better understanding of the immediate effects of mitigation actions on the territory's emissions and our progress towards the first interim target of 40 per cent reduction by the year 2020.

Importantly, this new inventory approach will adopt a methodology based on international best practice through adherence to the 2006 IPCC guidelines for national greenhouse gas inventories. The inventory will also be consistent with the internationally recognised global protocol for community-scale greenhouse gas emission inventories released in 2013. The ISR, that is, the commissioner's report, also recommended that the government adopt other aspects of the international greenhouse gas protocol, notably the greenhouse gas protocol policy action standard and the greenhouse gas protocol mitigation goals accounting and reporting standard.

The greenhouse gas protocol has become an increasingly important medium for greenhouse gas reporting, providing the reporting basis for both the Compact of Mayors and the Climate Group's States and Regions Alliance, two international fora that the government has recently joined. Aligning the territory's policy development and reporting processes with these organisations will assist us in ensuring that our policies and actions are recognised amongst the most progressive jurisdictions in the world.

The government is also preparing to review action plan 2 as it reaches its first review point this year. Through this review, the government will recognise and adopt the standards of the greenhouse gas protocol and apply these standards where it is appropriate to do so in future climate policy development.

The commissioner's report also noted the importance of ensuring that climate change mitigation and adaptation policy be underpinned by reputable and robust and internationally recognised science. The government agrees with this approach. Through the ACT Climate Change Council, the government has access to some of Australia's foremost climate scientists and academics with strong international links, including a number who are lead or contributing authors to the IPCC's fifth assessment report. With these links and others such as the ANU Climate Change Institute, the Crawford School of Public Policy and the University of Canberra, the government will ensure that future climate policy has a sound evidence base.

The commissioner's report found that ACT government policy and the legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets have positioned the territory as among the world's most progressive jurisdictions in terms of mitigating the impacts of climate change. Through the challenges and opportunities identified, I am certain that the government has the ability to continue to deliver cutting edge climate policy and push the envelope in terms of pioneering mitigation and adaptation strategies.

I am very pleased with the achievements made through the implementation of AP2 since its release in 2012. I look forward to continuing to update the Assembly on how the ACT can continue to embrace the challenge of climate change and, through action, demonstrate leadership to communities locally, nationally and internationally.

I am also thankful to the staff in the commissioner's office responsible for the preparation of what was a very detailed and analytical report. I am also grateful to the work of the former commissioner, Mr Neil, for the work he did in this respect. I anticipate that the next implementation status report, due in 2017, will be equally comprehensive, and I commend the government's response to the Assembly.

Papers

Ms Burch presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act and Financial Management Act—Cemeteries and Crematoria (ACT Public Cemeteries Authority Governing Board) Appointment 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-231 (LR, 17 August 2015).

Children and Young People Act—Children and Young People (Death Review Committee) Deputy Chair Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-232 (LR, 17 August 2015).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—Civil Law (Wrongs) Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia Professional Standards Scheme Amendment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-240 (LR, 24 August 2015).

Domestic Violence Agencies Act—

Domestic Violence Agencies (Council) Appointment 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-228 (LR, 10 August 2015).

Domestic Violence Agencies (Council) Appointment 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-229 (LR, 10 August 2015).

Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act—Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) FiT Capacity Release Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-227 (LR, 10 August 2015).

Environment Protection Act—Environment Protection Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-28 (LR, 31 August 2015).

Financial Management Act—Financial Management Investment Guidelines 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-238 (LR, 24 August 2015).

First Home Owner Grant Act—First Home Owner Grant (Amount) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-247 (LR, 31 August 2015).

Gambling and Racing Control Act and Gaming Machine Act—Gaming Legislation Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1), including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2015-27 (LR, 24 August 2015).

Gaming Machine Act—Gaming Machine (Fees) Determination 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-246 (LR, 27 August 2015).

Land Rent Act—

Land Rent (Total income of lessee—post-1 October 2013 leases) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-223 (LR, 13 August 2015).

Land Rent (Total income of lessee—pre-1 October 2013 leases) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-224 (LR, 13 August 2015).

Lands Acquisition Act—Lands Acquisition (Reconsideration of pre-acquisition declaration—Block 4 Section 33 Division of Dickson) Confirmation 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-248 (LR, 31 August 2015).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Act—

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Members' Salary Cap Determination 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-242 (LR, 27 August 2015).

Legislative Assembly (Members' Staff) Speaker's Salary Cap Determination 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-241 (LR, 27 August 2015).

Official Visitor Act—

Official Visitor (Children and Young People Services) Visit and Complaint Guidelines 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-244 (LR, 27 August 2015).

Official Visitor (Children and Young People) Appointment 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-249 (LR, 31 August 2015).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Moncrieff) Determination 2015 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-233 (LR, 17 August 2015).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Rules for Sports Bookmaking) Determination 2015 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-236 (LR, 17 August 2015).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2015 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-237 (LR, 17 August 2015).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2015 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-235 (LR, 17 August 2015).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2015 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-234 (LR, 17 August 2015).

Rates Act—Rates (Deferral) Determination 2015 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-225 (LR, 13 August 2015).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) (Pay Parking Area Fees) Determination 2015 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-250 (LR, 31 August 2015).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2015 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-222 (LR, 6 August 2015).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2015 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-243 (LR, 27 August 2015).

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act—Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment Regulation 2015 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2015-29 (LR, 28 August 2015).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Over 60s Home Bonus Scheme) Determination 2015 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-226 (LR, 13 August 2015).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme) Determination 2015 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-230 (LR, 13 August 2015).

Territory Superannuation Provision Protection Act—Superannuation Management Guidelines 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-239 (LR, 24 August 2015).

University of Canberra Act—

University of Canberra (Academic Progress) Statute 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-261 (LR, 14 September 2015).

University of Canberra (Liquor) Statute 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-259 (LR, 14 September 2015).

University of Canberra (Obligations) Statute 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-260 (LR, 14 September 2015).

University of Canberra (Parking and Traffic) Statute 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-262 (LR, 14 September 2015).

University of Canberra (Student Conduct) Statute 2015—Disallowable Instrument DI2015-258 (LR, 14 September 2015).

Urban renewal

Discussion of matter of public importance

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

The importance of urban renewal in Civic and the town centres

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.44): I am delighted to speak about this very important matter of public importance with regard to urban renewal in Civic and the town centres. Canberra, of course, was designed and based around the town centres and the city rather than many other places which simply permeate from the city centre. The town centre model was designed to allow residents to access everything they regularly need in their local community. Placing employment, shopping and recreation facilities at the town centres ensures that Canberrans do not need to travel across the territory to access their basic services.

The town centre model is also responsible for minimal traffic congestion on Canberra roads. Minimising the number of cars travelling to the city means that roads are not clogged with unnecessary traffic as they can be in other cities. However, unfortunately, the increased concentration of employment in Civic and exclusively in Civic is undermining the design of Canberra and we have seen the result in increased congestion on roads throughout Canberra. Although work and recreation habits do change, the town centres remain important to the character of our city. Town centres should be the heart of each of our districts. Each of the town centres, along with the city, should be vibrant centres.

Despite much talk from the government about the importance of Civic, it continues to be treated as a poor cousin to other parts not far from the city. Developments in City West, New Acton, Braddon and City East, whilst all independently are very attractive areas, are all pulling the city, the CBD that is, to the north, south, east and west. For that reason, in part, the heart of the city, including City Walk and Garema Place, are somewhat neglected.

Ratepayers in the city and Braddon are required to pay a CBD levy which is supposed to be used to fund improvement here in the city centre. However, the city centre continues to be neglected and rundown and ratepayers are not seeing much return for their extra rates. In fact, business owners across the city and indeed Braddon are not seeing a return on the levy which they pay.

Further to this, the government is now actively working against business in the city. In June the Chief Minister and Treasurer revealed further increases to parking charges, while also increasing the hours of paid parking to 10.30 pm. Seemingly, these charges are needed to bring in extra revenue for the government, which of course needs to squeeze every possible dollar it can to pay for its ill-conceived light rail project. It was revealed in June that the Magistrates Court car park on London Circuit is likely to be closed to make way for a light rail depot.

The opposition does not support this proposal. Light rail, as proposed by the government, will not help the city centre. Of course you can develop Northbourne Avenue and the city without light rail. But you cannot have the city functioning as it should when parking your car in the city is near impossible.

If we want people to enjoy the city, they have to be able to get there. And whilst the government may talk about light rail being the answer the truth is that only three per cent of Canberra's population will live within walking distance of a tram stop and that, of course, is only relevant if their intended destination is somewhere along the tram route.

All across Canberra a lack of investment and employment at town centres means that our town centres are struggling. Without a stable workforce and appropriate facilities it is unfortunately no surprise that many people choose to stay away from their local town centre or indeed travel across the city. In some town centres increased residential development and refurbished commercial spaces are helping to create more vibrant centres. This should be encouraged in all town centres.

The best way to bring vitality to town centres across Canberra, whether they be Gungahlin, Belconnen, Woden or Tuggeranong, is to get people there, and the best way to get people there, of course, is to encourage and improve parking at these centres, to improve and encourage public transport usage and to improve and encourage residential development in these town centres.

Increased density in the town centres is important to maintain their viability. Another benefit of increased density in the town centres is that the character of our suburbs can also more easily be maintained. Every residential development that takes place in a town centre is a development that does not need to be placed in our suburbs. It makes sense to locate high density developments close to the services at town centres including the transport, health and social services that already operate in these precincts.

Last week the Canberra Liberals announced that if we are elected in October next year we will remove the lease variation charge in Civic and the town centres for four years. The lease variation charge is counterintuitive and is unfair. It discourages development and penalises those who are trying to increase density, which supposedly is this government's mantra. Ultimately the lease variation charge leads to less development in town centres and more development elsewhere in Canberra and also increases the cost of projects that do happen to go ahead. These increased costs are passed on to homebuyers, particularly first-home buyers.

There is a furphy being propelled by those opposite that the lease variation charge is simply paid by developers. The truth is that the lease variation charge is paid by the people who purchase residential units in those developments. The lease variation charge is passed on as a cost and is embedded in the unit prices of the residential units that are sold. If there was not a \$50,000 tax on a unit, the developer can get the same profit with a \$50,000 reduction in the sale price of that unit.

The lease variation charge is genuinely counterintuitive to every single aspect of what we want our city to be. Not only does the lease variation charge stifle development; it does not bring revenue to the government either. Why? Because it is stifling development and therefore is not even generating the revenue that they claim is warranted. The government collected less than \$5 million in the last four years from development in town centres and the city. The lease variation charge is a failure in every sense.

The lease variation charge, some might argue, is actually an instrument designed to prop up the LDA. It is an instrument which encourages greenfield development. Given the LDA does in effect have a monopoly on residential estate development here in the ACT, by encouraging more greenfield development and pushing density out of the town centres, out of the city and out of other built-up areas, it is of course propping up the LDA. And there are many people in Canberra who firmly believe that this is part of the rationale the government sticks to with the lease variation charge.

Removing the lease variation charge for developments in the city and the town centres for four years will encourage development and redevelopment across the territory. It

will make the new units close to important facilities more affordable and will drive the redevelopment of rundown commercial spaces. We may well see buildings which are currently vacant, buildings which are empty here in the city, retrofitted into viable apartments if the lease variation charge is removed. The lease variation charge is stopping the maximum use of available space. The best way, the most efficient way, to get people into the city once again and to get people living in the town centres is to remove the lease variation charge in these places.

The Chief Minister's response to the opposition's announcement shows his government's arrogance. Mr Barr has been the Treasurer for four years but he still does not understand how the lease variation charge works. He claims that the lease variation charge is not a disincentive for development. Mr Barr is wrong.

Anyone who is aware of what is going on in the construction industry knows that the lease variation charge is discouraging development across the city, especially in the CBD and in the town centres. The Property Council knows that removing the LVC in the city and the town centres is good policy. The executive director said:

In its current form, the LVC distorts investment decisions and impedes the upgrade of empty, redundant C and D Grade commercial offices—contributing to what is now the second highest office vacancy rate in the country ... The Property Council always supports good policy—and the Liberal Party's commitment to relax the LVC in the CBD and town centres is good policy.

That is why the opposition is proud to announce that we will remove the lease variation charge for four years in the city and in the town centres. It will bring vitality to these areas which should be the densest parts of the ACT. In contrast to those opposite who simply want to build on every single transport corridor, we would much rather see large, dense nodes which are connected by high frequency public transport rather than scatter high density projects up and down the corridors, which does in fact slow down those corridors rather than the opposite.

Urban renewal is essential to the continued viability and vitality of the town centres and the city. I call on the government to join the Canberra Liberals in supporting our town centres by removing the lease variation charge in Civic, Tuggeranong, Woden, Belconnen and Gungahlin town centres.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Urban Renewal and Minister for Tourism and Events) (3.56): Urban renewal has been a priority of my government since day one, and our commitment to urban renewal is a commitment to strengthening our economy, continuing to improve the livability of our city, building on the character of our communities and delivering sustainable development outcomes. Urban renewal is good for our suburbs and it is essential for our town centres and the CBD. It is good for our community.

In the end, urban renewal is about people and it is about jobs; it is about where we live, our homes and our happiness. With urban renewal we will activate and reinvigorate our city and town centres and make Canberra an even better place to live, to work and to visit. In doing this, we will create vibrant and bustling areas of economic and

leisure activity; town centres that reflect a confident, bold and ready city; and a vibrant and dynamic CBD. We have established an urban renewal portfolio and appointed a coordinator-general. We have a budget that invests in urban renewal and invests in Canberra.

More recently we have established a team focusing on city and town centre activation under the Coordinator-General, Urban Renewal. Canberra's CBD and our town centres are some of the key places where Canberrans come together and help create our identity as a city. They will continue to be essential as we continue to grow, strengthen our economy and live closer to where we work and play. The government is committed to these hubs as key centres of activity where people live, work, shop and visit. Our town centres and hubs will be strengthened through a range of urban renewal projects as well as through transport renewal through capital metro.

The Canberra time to talk exercise last year and the year before showed loudly and clearly the Canberra community's desire for "place making". Canberrans told us the city of the future would need to grow into the legacy that we received at self-government. Through time to talk Canberrans told us they wanted a city with more variety; more homes near employment and services; mixed-use developments to complement our leafy garden suburbs and single-purpose commercial zones; and better uses of our existing urban areas in a city that reflects their needs and visions.

Urban renewal is how we will deliver the city Canberrans told us they want—a vibrant and livable city with improved competitiveness, productivity, livability and economic viability. Urban renewal is how we will use our existing infrastructure to increase investment, create new markets for new businesses and service new facilities and new residents.

"Urban renewal" is somewhat of a dry term, but at its heart it is about people. It is about creating high quality public spaces that promote health, happiness and wellbeing. It is about shaping the natural and the built environments to improve social interaction and improve our community's quality of life. Urban renewal is about how we shape our city to reflect who we are—we are—confident people, bold people and a city that is ready and has earned its position amongst the greatest places to live in the world. Urban renewal is how we will make people the centre of our places and how we will connect our communities together, because a connected city will give us an even greater sense of identity and belonging.

As our city grows towards a population of half a million people, we need to shape that growth so that we can hold onto the best of our past as we grasp the opportunities of our future. We need urban renewal to make sure the Canberra of the future is a place that is livable, resilient and connected, just as it is today. In the 2015-16 budget we have shown our determination to see our urban renewal agenda shape our city for the future. We dedicated \$10.1 million to construct a new waterfront precinct at West Basin.

Construction of the first stage will commence later this year and will include a new park, playground, barbeque facilities and recreation areas at point park on the southern headland of West Basin adjacent to Commonwealth Avenue bridge. There

will be a purpose-built pavilion on the promenade for a cafe or tourist facility. New paths will connect Commonwealth Avenue to the waterfront, and upgrades to the western section of Barrine Drive will occur. There will be two new signalised intersections on Commonwealth Avenue to enable better access to the waterfront and Commonwealth Park.

The 2015-16 budget saw a record investment in renewing our public housing stock—nearly \$160 million to replace aged public housing with new homes across the city. In 2014 the government released our vision for the city centre towards 2030 and beyond through the city plan, which will contribute to urban consolidation, sustainability and strong and connected communities and places for people. The city plan puts together several major projects that will shape our city for the future and drive urban renewal—city to the lake, capital metro, the Northbourne Avenue corridor redevelopment and the major upgrade of Constitution Avenue. We are currently progressing the city plan implementation through the city and Northbourne Avenue urban design framework study. This will ensure that the planning and implementation in this key area is integral to the planning of Canberra as a connected and prosperous city.

I appreciate there is a higher level of office vacancy in Civic than we have seen in the past. There is one key reason for that—the federal Liberal government’s decision to cut jobs, jobs and even more jobs from Canberra’s economy. I am very proud of the work this Labor government has done under my leadership and that of former Chief Minister Katy Gallagher to protect Canberra’s economy: a stimulus package, including the biggest ever infrastructure spend in territory history; a business development plan to help diversify our economy; and making changes to support our higher education sector.

The thing about governing is that it boils down to choices and priorities. Let me be clear: my government will always put Canberra, our people, our jobs, and our city, first. That is our priority for the future. We know what the Liberals’ priorities are: cuts—cuts to jobs in our economy, cuts to the services Canberrans rely on, and cuts to the social fabric of our city. Apparently tax cuts for a selected few of their property developer mates are also on the agenda. These are not our priorities; our priorities are making our city, community and economy stronger. One of the ways we are doing that is by rejuvenating our CBD through a range of planning and capital works programs. We are partnering with business owners and investors to continue the momentum of growth and renewal in the city centre.

This includes building stage one of the capital metro light rail with a terminus on Northbourne Avenue; managing through traffic in the city and improving peripheral routes, reducing congestion and creating a more pedestrian friendly environment; significantly increasing mixed-use residential development within the city to up to 20,000 residents, providing more street life and encouraging a night time economy; providing better connections between the city and the ANU; providing better connections between the city and the lake by reducing the barrier of Parkes Way and connecting Civic with the parklands, cultural institutions and commonwealth activity in the central national area; improving walking, cycling and open space networks to promote active travel, healthy living and to better connect urban neighbourhoods with

community, recreation, transport and services; and implementing a transport action plan, addressing corridor-wide arterial bypasses, public transport, city parking and local area traffic management, and reviewing urban infrastructure standards to create streets for people. Through the city area action plan we have invested \$20 million in public realm upgrades, improving security, walkability and public amenity of the city.

The government will continue to focus through the city plan on a range of specific initiatives on renewal within the CBD. This includes work on the redevelopment of the Allawah, Bega and Currong flats complex on the city edge; the city to the lake program; and the Constitution Avenue upgrade. We have recently extended the City West precinct deed with the ANU that identifies three sites and a four-year land release program to facilitate ongoing growth.

In the 2015-16 budget we provided funding for footpath and lighting upgrades for Braddon and Hague Park and we have prepared a new deed of grant to manage and administer the city centre marketing and improvements levy. We are also in the process of developing an action plan for the activation of Garema Place, and we will continue to work with CBD Ltd to fund a series of fantastic events in the CBD. Of course, we have the courts project announcement in the not-too-distant future—major infrastructure for the city as part of urban renewal.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Justice, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Transport Reform) (4.06): I thank Mr Coe for raising this issue today, because the ACT Greens have a vision for what genuine urban renewal looks like. We are lucky to be able to enjoy both the quiet, green, spacious suburbs as well as the humming inner city living with all its vibrancy. We are fortunate we still have time to plan the shape of our city and what it will look like, and we should maximise that opportunity.

Indeed, like other members, I attended the Property Council forum on the CBD last week. It was a very interesting session and some great ideas were shared. But I was reflecting on the fact that a range of other town centres are also important and also require similar efforts to ensure they are successful and vibrant. The forum identified the need for partnerships between government and the private sector, and that is something there is plenty of scope for in the ACT. We have seen positive examples of partnerships, and I think we have got a lot more scope to do those sorts of things.

The Greens also support mechanisms for developer contributions such as the lease variation charge. We have always supported the principle of the LVC, and we have negotiated special remissions for social housing, child care and high environmental ratings for buildings. They are policy levers that can be used in this process. We believe it is appropriate that, when a significant financial gain is made from the change in a lease purpose clause, the community derives some of that benefit. That is a principle we have stood by in the debate about the lease variation charge. Mr Smyth is bringing this issue forward tomorrow in private members' business, so we will get a further chance to discuss it.

I listened to Mr Coe's remarks today, but I do not think the LVC is the only issue when it comes to getting more residential apartments in the city. My former colleague Caroline Le Couteur has canvassed the issue of parking spaces. I have had discussions with developers in this town who want to adaptively reuse a building, but the parking requirements and the fact that old buildings only have a certain number of parking spaces underneath limit their ability to use those buildings. We need to see this not as a silver bullet but be prepared to discuss the broader issues of what are the other factors in these discussions. If you are required to put in a certain number of parking spots but they are not currently available in the basement, that can restrain the ability to turn an existing commercial office building into a residential development, for example.

When it comes to the ongoing renewal of the city and our town centres, we need them to be connected by reliable, efficient and effective public transport. As such, a well-resourced and flexible bus system is part of the equation, and that is why we also support developing the fixed spine of light rail across our city—to provide that high quality, high frequency, uninterrupted connection that does not get caught in the traffic congestion that buses get caught in. Within my ministerial portfolio Territory and Municipal Services delivers services the Canberra community relies on every day. The recent budget provided funding that allows TAMS to improve these services as part of the ongoing maintenance and urban renewal of our city. The work we are doing on enhancing our transport systems and networks and integrating them is an example of that with improvements to the ACTION bus system as well as a greater focus on active travel so that we are providing a range of options for people to get around this city smoothly and effectively.

The Bunda Street shareway is an example of great urban renewal. It has created a shared space for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, and it is designed to support special community events and commercial activity. As somebody who passes through this space on a regular basis, I am pleased we have already seen a number of new cafes open in that area. One of the food outlets that were on the front page of the paper complaining about the Bunda Street works has, in fact, nearly doubled its outdoor seating space since Bunda Street was completed. A couple of other places are being readied to open in Bunda Street, so we are starting to see what the experts told us about these kinds of shared spaces. They produce vibrancy, they produce spaces people want to linger in. We are seeing some manifestation of that taking place in Bunda Street, and there is more to come.

The master planning that has been undertaken for the town centres at Woden and Belconnen has real potential to assist in the urban renewal of those centres with improvements to active travel and consideration of the release of certain blocks of land for residential development. I agree with Mr Coe on that point—having more people living in our town centres is highly desirable. Those of us who have been in Canberra for awhile—I know most people in this place have—will remember areas like Civic and Woden going back 15 or 20 years. They are still pretty quiet, but if you go back further when they were just commercial zones, people used to make jokes about how barren they were on the weekend, and they were well-founded jokes.

As we undertake urban renewal we need to make sure we maintain and invest in our green infrastructure. We know not too many of the Liberals believe in action on climate change. I even note that since taking over the Liberal leadership the new Prime Minister has committed to continuing Tony Abbott's widely discredited policy of direct action. But the key to urban renewal in the face of climate change is the development of green infrastructure in the city and our town centres. Trees in our urban areas are an important component of Canberra's identity and also a significant means to provide a more tempered climate on hotter days. The recent budget directed \$130,000 to develop a long-term strategy for ongoing funding for the maintenance of urban trees. I am pleased this goes in part to delivering on a parliamentary agreement item.

The trees and green spaces in our town centres have multiple benefits, including growing food in community gardens, holding community gatherings and encouraging active life styles. That is another reason the government has done things such as put in new bubblers right across the city—to encourage people to be in our open spaces and common spaces and feel they can, in that particular example, get access to free water.

We have spoken in this place many times about shopping centre upgrades, and TAMS continues to roll them out at places across the city. In the recent budget we saw a significant investment of \$860,000 for works in Brierly Street and Trenerry Square in Weston group centre, or Coleman Court. We saw investment for the Erindale shopping centre in Gartside Street. It will receive a significant makeover over two years with a new design, additional car parking, pedestrian paths and associated infrastructure. There are also works in the Tuggeranong town centre in Anketell Street to improve the public domain.

An important element of the discussion about urban renewal is the issue of consultation. Sometimes the vision for our city can be undermined by inappropriate development and poor community engagement in early stages of planning. The challenge is to engage early on with the community in a meaningful way to develop a shared vision for the future of our town centres and the city. There is a lot of scope in this city for change; large segments of our community are hungry for change and for Canberra to be an evolving city from what it is now. That goes back to the earlier comment around both preserving the suburbs but also driving density in the town centres. The important part is to engage the community in that discussion and engage them early.

With ambitious and exciting new projects and examples of urban renewal on the table for the decade ahead in the ACT, like city to the lake, the delivery of light rail, and projects at the Kingston foreshore, East Lake, Dickson, the University of Canberra and Belconnen and Gungahlin town centres, we need to make sure the community has a strong say in them and feels a sense of ownership as different things start to happen in Canberra that are not the way they have always been done.

I emphasise the importance of sustainability with urban renewal projects and the importance of showcasing innovative design and environmental sustainability, both in public spaces and also in private buildings, and the quality of buildings. Urban infill

has the opportunity to enhance sustainability outcomes, to increase density and to provide high quality infill. But we need to make sure buildings are energy efficient, attractive from the street and provide passive surveillance. Apartments should be designed to achieve solar access, cross-ventilation and be protected as much as possible from noise. The community has high expectations when it comes to urban renewal, and the challenge for all of us in this place is to deliver that as this city develops.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (4.16): I will start by thanking Mr Coe for bringing this matter before the Assembly today. It is a matter that I think is close to all our hearts. Before I go to some of the important points, I will reflect on the comments of those opposite. I was a little encouraged, I have to say, by the tenor of Mr Rattenbury with regard to the lease variation charge. He acknowledged that repealing the lease variation charge in the CBD and the town centres is not a silver bullet, and we certainly acknowledge that. It is not a silver bullet. It is an important step; it is an important measure. I hope that language today reflects that he does understand that that measure is an important step in densification and renewal of our town centres and the CBD. I look forward to that debate tomorrow.

I was a little bit disappointed by Mr Barr's comments, particularly in relation to two aspects. One is the oft-repeated criticism of the federal government, the Liberal side of government, for cutting jobs. It must again be acknowledged that the jobs that have been cut at the federal level—85 per cent of them—were cut by Kevin Rudd; 85 per cent were cut by Kevin Rudd. He said, "I'm going to take a meat axe to the federal public service and cut 14,200 jobs." It is not that I applaud either side of politics for this aspect, but if we are going to apportion blame let us at least be honest about it. Mr Barr, probably in his rhetoric about the federal government, might need to get himself a new script.

Attacking developers is pretty short-sighted. This class warfare, this playing to the comrades at the CFMEU, is a line that does not, I think, do the Chief Minister of this territory any justice. Ultimately, the people that Mr Barr identifies and denigrates as, "Oh, your developer mates", in a pretty unseemly manner—many of whom are people who want to participate in developing, renewing and growing our town centres and Civic—are the people who have helped build this city. They are people who, with their families, have been connected with our community for many decades. They have been involved in growing this city. To denigrate them simply as, "Oh, your developer mates" is best saved, I think, for the Dickson subbranch of the Labor Party and the CFMEU president—if he is available—and others. I think that would be a better time to bring out that sort of cheap, nasty, class warfare rather than attacking the people who have in many ways built this city.

Mr Barr: Like what you have just engaged in? You know a bit about class warfare, Jeremy.

MR HANSON: Mr Barr is injecting about class warfare. This is the problem with Mr Barr. He wants to talk about class warfare as if he is the noble Robin Hood out there looking after the poor. But he is far more the sheriff of Nottingham. There he is stealing from the poor and giving to the rich at every opportunity—whether it is the

poor people out at Charnwood or other poor communities in this city. He is ripping money out of them through the pokie money and giving it to the Labor Party, the 1973 Foundation, who are property developers themselves; the 1973 Foundation, the funding wing of the Labor Party.

As I understand it, they do most of their development in Sydney. Is that right? I think they do it in Sydney. Maybe they did not want to pay the lease variation charge. Maybe they looked at it and thought, "Let's do some development in Woden or in Tuggeranong or in the CBD. No, why invest all that money we've ripped out of the people in Charnwood and Weston Creek? Why invest that money in Canberra when we can avoid the lease variation charge and go to Sydney?"

Shame on the Labor Party; shame on this government. There he is ripping the money from the poor and giving to the rich. Those are developers. People say, "Oh, the developer mates of the Liberal Party." Well, let us talk about the developer mates of the Labor Party—the 1973 Foundation, or the Tradies group. My understanding is that they are involved in a little bit of development themselves. That is my understanding. They are developers in this town. I wonder what they think about the lease variation charge. They are probably a little bit conflicted when it comes to it with the comrades. It probably depends on which hat they have on when they come lobbying the Chief Minister about the latest development that they want to do.

The rank hypocrisy from those opposite, who sneer at those people who have built our city, when they themselves are developers, when they themselves are giving pokie money to build in Sydney and then reaping the money from the developments they are doing in Sydney to fund their election campaigns. Shame! This is the great story of this Labor Party and the CFMEU and the way they operate. Mr Barr has the audacity to sneer at people who want to do some good in the CBD or in our town centres.

There is no doubt, when talking about urban renewal, that in order to have urban renewal you have to have urban decay. We went to the forum last week. It was a shame that Labor Party members were not there. I recognise that Mr Rattenbury was. But I was there, Mr Coe was there and Mr Smyth was there talking about the CBD. When you talk about the decay, the decline and the many comments about this in the CBD and our town centres and you have had a government for 14 years, who could possibly be responsible? Here he is, Mr Barr, going around talking about his urban renewal agenda when it is his mob who have allowed this decay in our town centres and the CBD to occur.

What is their response? It is to sneer at the developers, to sneer at the very people who have built this city in the past. Sadly, like their mates in the 1973 Foundation, they are looking for opportunities elsewhere because it is so difficult to build in this town, be it through the quagmire of planning regulations, the LDA and some of its decisions or the tax regime that we all understand is not working and that is providing perverse outcomes. It is driving entrepreneurship, renewal and ultimately jobs out of this territory.

There is much to be done. Mr Coe spoke well about the lease variation charge and the need to fix that. It is not just about densification; it is also about affordability. As

Mr Coe mentioned, when people actually do development, the cost of the LVC is passed on to consumers. I wish I had more time to talk about it. However, it is worth talking about the irony, the hypocrisy, when Mr Barr talks about a party in too many rooms and then in the next speech he talks about his pop up, what a success that has been and how he wants to build up Northbourne and down to West Basin, and then he talks about what is happening at New Acton.

If there are perverse planning outcomes, if we are having a party in too many rooms, if the pop up is an exemplar of poor planning outcomes and if the LDA is a behemoth that I think has reached a point where people who are trying to do business in this town are incredibly frustrated, the question is: at whose feet do we put this? I think the answer is that it is those opposite. It is this government that has created the problem. We are seeing that the people that want to build in this city are doing exactly what the government's mates in the 1973 Foundation are doing with the pokie money: they are taking the pokie money out of Canberra and they are going up to Sydney and doing developments in Sydney, because even the Labor Party does not want to pay the lease variation charge.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (4.26): I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to talk about the importance of urban renewal in Civic and in our town centres. We are all proud of Canberra; it is truly a wonderful place to live. As we all know, this government has a clear plan for urban renewal and for our town centres. Our latest budget will deliver more funding for urban and suburban renewal in particular, including revitalising our shopping centres, maintaining our playgrounds, mowing our suburbs and cleaning our lakes. We will see an additional \$8 million invested over the next four years for more frequent mowing across Canberra's 4,500 hectares of urban open space, weed control on major thoroughfares, maintenance of trees, shrubs, lakes and ponds and anti-graffiti measures.

Urban renewal and maintenance is a core function of the territory government and is something Labor is committed to. We are renewing public housing, initiating planning reforms and redeveloping significant areas of our city, in particular town centres—all efforts that will create a better Canberra. In my region of Gungahlin, the town centre is extremely important, as I know the town centres are across the city. Each has its own history and character, and this government understands this deeply. We understand, for example, what it will mean to town centres to lose jobs, in particular how devastating the loss of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection would be to the Belconnen town centre.

Although Gungahlin is one of the ACT's younger regions, we need investment in services to ensure the region can keep pace with the incredible population growth we are seeing. The establishment of a brand-new office block, Winyu House, in the Gungahlin town centre earlier this year is central to the town centre's success. Winyu House is home to some 650 ACT government workers, mainly from ACT Shared Services. It also houses the Access Canberra shopfront and hosts a childcare centre and a vibrant new cafe.

Not only does Winyu House bring 650 workers into the town centre to shop at local shops and boost the local economy; it also ensures there is local employment

opportunity in the heart of Gungahlin. Most people living in Gungahlin leave each day to go to work, but Winyu House ensures there is a public service presence in our region, just as there is in Canberra's other town centres.

As Gungahlin grows, there are other opportunities for how our urban core develops appropriately. For example, I am currently running a survey to find out what people think of the future of Hibberson Street. Some people would like to see it closed to traffic permanently. Others think it should be a shared zone similar to Bunda Street, closed only during the day or perhaps one way. Whatever the outcome, it is clear people would like to see some change on this thoroughfare now that it is busier and livelier. It is clear people want to see more feet on Hibberson Street. Changing Hibberson Street shows that urban renewal does not have to mean knocking down buildings and starting again. (*Time expired.*)

Discussion concluded.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 36

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 36, dated 15 September 2015, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 36 contains the committee's comments on four bills, six pieces of subordinate legislation, two national regulations and three government responses. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Legislative Assembly delegation to Taiwan

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra) (4.30): Last month, I was given the opportunity to participate in an ACT Legislative Assembly delegation to Taiwan, engaging in cultural and economic exchanges. As many in the ACT would know, I have a keen interest in Indigenous issues, and this shaped my desire to meet prominent Taiwanese Indigenous people, develop cultural links and see what opportunities there are for mutual learning and cooperation between the Indigenous peoples of Australia and Taiwan.

Indigenous Taiwanese now form two per cent of Taiwan's population, which is similar to the proportion of Australians who are Indigenous, and they number around 500,000. Like Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Taiwanese form a number of nations, with 15 "tribes" officially recognised by Taiwan's government, with a small number still unrecognised.

Indigenous Taiwanese are a Taiwanese ethnic group of Austronesian heritage. There is a strong view in academia that many of the cultures and languages across Oceania and the Indonesian archipelago originate in Taiwan, making Taiwan the primogenitor of many of our region's societies. Indigenous Taiwanese were the original inhabitants of Taiwan until mass Chinese immigration to Taiwan during the Qing dynasty shifted Taiwan's demographics in favour of Han Chinese, who now form over 95 per cent of Taiwan's population.

During the visit to Taiwan, the Assembly delegation, including me, met with representatives of the Taiwan Indigenous community. A detailed briefing of the current situation for Indigenous people in Taiwan was followed by a wide-ranging discussion that covered comparative health issues in Taiwan and Australia, land rights, education and cultural support. Of particular interest to me in this briefing were the provisions on indigenous cooperation in the recent trade agreement between Taiwan and New Zealand. These are designed to grow and enable trade as well as facilitate cultural and people-to-people links between New Zealand Maori and the Indigenous people of Taiwan.

Indigenous Taiwanese and Indigenous Australians share similar struggles. Both groups are fighting to preserve their cultures and languages in a colonised land and ensure that their cultures play a significant role in their national societies. Both groups also face the challenges of lower health and economic outcomes than their national peers.

Indigenous Taiwanese have made important contributions to Taiwan that we can learn from, including their struggle for self-determination since the 1980s and their efforts to incorporate their cultural pride into broader Taiwanese and even international culture. Indigenous Taiwanese peoples' contribution to international culture include the noted Taiwanese pop singer A-Mei.

At a political level, Indigenous Taiwanese struggle for equality and political rights. As the Taiwanese government liberalised and became more democratic during the late 1980s and 1990s, policies towards Indigenous Taiwanese culture changed from trying to force them to adopt Han Chinese culture and language towards preservation and promotion. The Taiwanese legislature now has six of its 113 seats reserved for representatives elected by Indigenous voters.

The struggles of Indigenous Taiwanese, while unique, have many common characteristics with that of Indigenous peoples across the world, including here in Australia. I certainly appreciated this unique opportunity to learn more of Taiwan and its peoples, and I look forward to the friendship continuing to grow in the future.

Mal Meninga gala

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.33): I rise to talk about the Canberra Raiders, who held their annual Mal Meninga gala evening last week. The Canberra Raiders finished their season two Sundays back with a 28-24 golden point win over the Parramatta Eels. It capped off an exciting but frustrating season for the Raiders, who finished 10th on the ladder and unfortunately missed the finals. However, there are promising signs for the Raiders, and I am confident we will see the Raiders playing in the finals next season.

Away from the senior side, the Canberra Raiders under 20s side finished their season on Sunday after a narrow 24-22 loss in an elimination final against West Tigers. I congratulate them on making the finals series and hope the side can go further into the finals series next year.

On a more positive note, the Raiders feeder team, the Mounties, who compete in the New South Wales Cup, took out the minor premiership. After a win in the first round of the finals series, the Mounties will this weekend play the Newcastle Knights for the right to play in the New South Wales Cup final. I wish them the best of luck this weekend.

At the end of every season the Canberra Raiders host their annual Mal Meninga gala evening. This evening provides the opportunity to recognise individual achievements during the year and reflect on the club's accomplishments throughout the season. I wish to congratulate Iosia Soliola on winning the Mal Meninga Medal this year. The Mal Meninga Medal is awarded to the Raiders "players' player" of the season, and is awarded on the basis of a 3-2-1 vote cast by each player after every game. Soliola finished ahead of Jake Wighton, with hooker Josh Hodgson third and Blake Austin and Shaun Fensom finishing in a tie for fourth.

I congratulate all those who won awards on the night. They include: Jack Wighton, NRL coaches award; Luke Bateman, NRL rookie of the year; Steve Babic, Fred Daly clubman of the year; Tevita Pangai Junior, national youth competition player of the year; Thomas Cronan, national youth competition coaches award; Tre Williams, Gordon McLucas junior representative player of the year; and Lachlan Lewis, Geoff Caldwell welfare and education officer award.

Raiders captain, Jarrod Croker, finished the regular season as the NRL's highest point scorer, with 236 points for the season, and I congratulate him on this achievement. Also deserving of congratulations is rising star Mitch Barnett, who was recently named as the New South Wales Cup player of the year after a strong season with the Mounties. I also note that Huawei have committed to another season of being the major sponsor for the Raiders, and I understand that DHA and Canberra Milk are also soon to be making announcements in support of sponsorship going into the future. I thank all the other sponsors that loyally support the Canberra Raiders.

I again congratulate all the recipients of awards from the Mal Meninga gala evening. I wish the Canberra Raiders all the best for next season, and I encourage all members to attend matches next year. Further details about the Canberra Raiders can be found at their website at raiders.com.au.

National broadband network forum

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo) (4.36): Last week I hosted a national broadband network forum with Andrew Leigh, the federal member for Fraser, and the shadow minister for communications, Jason Clare, at the Uniting Church auditorium in Gungahlin. It was a well-attended event with around 40 people coming out on a fresh Canberra night to talk about the NBN rollout and connectivity issues at their homes and, in many cases, their home businesses. The majority of people lived in Gungahlin, but a number of Belconnen residents also attended.

When there was a change in federal government in 2013 significant changes were made to the NBN rollout plan. Under Labor, 93 per cent of homes and businesses would have got a super-fast version of the NBN using fibre optic cable to the home delivering speeds of up to one gigabyte per second, or 100 megabytes per second, download speed. Under the former communications minister, Malcolm Turnbull, now Australia's Prime Minister, the coalition chose to run a fibre-to-the-node scheme that promised speeds of just 25 megabytes per second. Fibre to the node sees fibre optic cables run along the street and terminate at a big box. The old copper network is then used to deliver service on what is known as the last mile to the house.

Unfortunately, even this second rate NBN is rolling out slower than Mr Turnbull promised, and it is more expensive than he promised. The cost of the coalition's NBN started out at \$29.5 billion in April 2013. It blew out to \$41 billion in December 2013, increased again to \$42 billion in August 2014 and it was recently announced that it will now cost up to \$56 billion. It will be slower and more expensive and it will not be future proof. It bodes very poorly for his prime ministership.

What became very clear at our forum is that Gungahlin on the whole has a great advantage over the majority of Canberra, but even within Gungahlin there are streets and parts of suburbs that have been left behind. In the suburb of Casey approximately two-thirds of the suburb has an NBN connection while the remainder await confirmation of when they will be connected.

The inconsistency of service, particularly throughout Canberra, means those preferring or requiring fast and reliable broadband will gravitate to those areas where it can be accessed. This places those without access or the means to move to an area with coverage at a real disadvantage, whether they be students researching for assessments, small businesses requiring large and fast downloads, or those incapacitated by age or disability hoping to access online consultations with health specialists, for example, from other cities or even from other countries.

Attendees at the forum spoke of their frustration with the company's rolling out of this essential infrastructure. Three residents of Dunlop in Belconnen spoke of their inability to access even ADSL through their existing copper network. One gentleman said he was told all the ports were occupied for their street and he was only able to connect fortuitously because he noticed someone moving from their street was having their line switched off. His friend a few houses away still relies on mobile broadband, at great expense, as he requires the internet at home for work.

Residents of Casey expressed enormous frustration that they are yet to be told when they can expect to be connected, when their neighbours right across the road are able to access the full benefits of the NBN. It remains unclear when Nicholls, an island of non-NBN connectivity in the region, will get NBN and, more importantly, whether it is fibre to the home or fibre to the node. NBN is not confirming these details with Nicholls. I know this is even more frustrating for our fellow residents across the Barton Highway and some of the staggeringly slow speeds for many residents in Tuggeranong.

The national broadband network is one of the biggest, most important infrastructure projects in Australia's history. Internet access is no longer a luxury; it is a utility. It is vital to the way we will provide health services, deliver world-class education and build a strong and growing economy. My federal Labor colleagues and I and this government will continue to advocate that Canberrans are given timely access to quality, fast broadband.

Interschool parliamentary debate

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.41): It was my honour and privilege to be the presiding officer for part of the interschool parliamentary debates held here in the chamber of the Legislative Assembly on 4 September 2015 for the years 8 and 9 debates. I acknowledge each of the 44 students who took part and represented their schools with pride and distinction. Those schools included Campbell High School, Canberra High School, Kingsford Smith School, Lyneham High School, Namadji School, St John Paul II College, Radford College, Telopea Park School and Wanniasa School.

Public speaking is a great skill to have and it stands you in good stead for the rest of your life. The parliamentary debate, with its emphasis on impromptu speaking, thinking on your feet, analytical thinking and the art of persuasion, teaches you how to present your argument and hopefully bring other people along with you. Being able to act as presiding officer for part of this exciting day was terrific. I have no doubt the students learnt a great deal from the opportunity, and I learnt a great deal from them as well.

I understand the importance of listening to our young people, to give them a voice in government and to help develop the next generation of our leaders. This is something in which all responsible members of our parliament must be engaged. I was impressed by their ability to get their points across, the analysis they put towards their issues and the solutions they came up with. Their ability to argue with other students as part of the debate and to disagree but still show respect and not take things personally was very worthwhile seeing. Debate is not just empty words; it is a flow of ideas and thoughts in a logical way to get your message across. These students demonstrated those skills admirably on the day. They exhibited enthusiasm and exuberance as well in getting their message across.

Being a leader of today or tomorrow means you have to be able to convince people and explain your ideas, and the speakers at these parliamentary debates did that. It

was a chance for them to meet other students, and I enjoyed meeting the students and teachers as well. They had many different backgrounds and different perspectives and came from a range of government and non-government schools.

I am sure it took a lot of effort for those students to prepare for the day, and I commend all those students as well as their teachers, and I am sure their parents and other members of their families, for the effort they put into it. I commend the opportunity to all members of the Assembly to come along and listen to the debates and talk with student debaters. It is important that we listen to young people and give them a voice. This platform is one way they can share that voice with all of us. They are the leaders of tomorrow and it is important that we listen to them today and give them every opportunity to influence the society they want to see in the future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.44 pm.

Schedule of amendments

Schedule 1

Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Amendments moved by the Chief Minister

1

Schedule 1, part 1.30

Amendment 1.92

Page 31, line 14—

omit amendment 1.92, substitute

[1.92] Section 13 (2)

omit everything before paragraph (a), substitute

(2) The applicant must give public notice of the application, stating that—

2

Schedule 1, part 1.30

Proposed new amendment 1.92A

Page 31, line 20—

insert

[1.92A] Section 13 (2) (a)

omit

advertisement

substitute

public notice

3

Schedule 1, part 1.30

Proposed new amendment 1.92B

Page 31, line 20—

insert

[1.92B] Section 13 (2), notes

substitute

Note 1 **Public notice** means notice on an ACT government website or in a daily newspaper circulating in the ACT (see Legislation Act, dict, pt 1).

Note 2 If a form is approved under the Control Act, s 53D for a public notice, the form must be used.

4

Schedule 1, part 1.30

Amendment 1.93

Page 32, line 1—

omit the heading, substitute

[1.93] Section 13 (3) (b)

5

Schedule 1, part 1.30

Amendment 1.94

Page 32, line 6—

omit the heading, substitute

[1.94] Section 13 (4) (a)