



Debates

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Wednesday, 10 February 2016

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Wednesday, 10 February 2016

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

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) (Autonomous Vehicle Trials) Amendment Bill 2016

Mr Coe, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.01): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Canberra Liberals believe that autonomous vehicles will be a vital component of the future of transport in Canberra. The legislation I have presented today provides for the safe and legal testing of autonomous vehicles in Canberra. It is the first step to allowing autonomous vehicles to drive on our roads.

The reality in Canberra is that we are a dispersed city. The very attributes which make this city the garden city, with so much open space and nature on our doorstep, also provide a significant challenge for transportation. This reality is starkly presented in the ACT government's proposed light rail project. Despite many hundreds of millions of dollars in proposed expenditure and 12 kilometres of track between Gungahlin and the city, just a few per cent of Canberra's population are within walking distance. In fact, in the vast majority of cities in the world, it would be nearly impossible to build a line of track for 12 kilometres in an urban area and serve a smaller portion of the population. The truth is that our city has been designed for private transportation, that is, vehicles that go from point A to point B at the demand of the driver.

Autonomous vehicles are an exciting prospect and something that we in Canberra should be excited about. Imagine a city where people are not disadvantaged because of where they live. Imagine a city where people with disabilities have access to reliable, on-demand and affordable transportation 24/7. Imagine a city where people do not need to own cars or have garages because they can book an autonomous vehicle from their club or cooperative. Imagine vehicles knowing definitively the optimal route and time of travel in order to maximise efficiency. Imagine a city that needs only a fraction of the number of cars because of the high utilisation of each autonomous vehicle. Imagine a time when considerably less car parking is required because autonomous vehicles continue to travel on another journey after that first journey is complete. All of this is very much a reality.

The former corporate vice president of research and development at General Motors in the United States said:

Australia's population densities are perfectly suited ... and one city in particular that stands out is Canberra.

As a small jurisdiction with a good road network and a dispersed population, we will be a beneficiary of this technology, and the Canberra Liberals want to get on board. Rather than committing to fixed tram infrastructure that will service only a small portion of the population at slower speeds than current buses, we want to truly embrace the future of transport.

Autonomous vehicles are currently being developed by the world's largest automobile manufacturers, including Tesla, Audi, General Motors, Ford, Hyundai and Volvo, to name a few. Mercedes-Benz is also developing an autonomous vehicle, with a new E-class model to be released next year that can speed up, change lanes and overtake at the press of a button. Tesla and Nissan are confident of releasing an autonomous vehicle in the next five years. Google, the search engine giant, is also working on an autonomous vehicle, whilst Apple is rumoured to be working on some form of vehicle too.

Here in Canberra we have companies such as Seeing Machines which are at the cutting edge of this technology. Through their work in the mining industry, with automobiles and in other fields, the work they are doing to make vehicles safer and more efficient is truly extraordinary and should be celebrated. But beyond the celebration we should be harnessing their work. That is why the Canberra Liberals want to be at the forefront of this advancement. We want Canberra to be open for business. We want to be able to say to the world's vehicle manufacturers and associated industries that Canberra wants your skills, technology and investment.

Further to this, Canberrans such as Kent Fitch have investigated in considerable depth the benefits of autonomous vehicles to Canberra. I encourage members to visit his website at projectcomputing.com.au to explore exactly what autonomous vehicles will mean for Canberra and the extraordinary optimisation we as a community can realise.

I also note the work that the Canberra Business Council are doing in this space. They have established a subcommittee to explore exactly how Canberra can benefit from this transformative technology.

Every day there are news stories from all over the world about the progress which is being made in this space. Many Australian companies are studying the progress of autonomous vehicle technology and planning for their introduction. Accenture's *Realising the benefits of autonomous vehicles in Australia* report is one such document which details the benefits to our communities of this very real technology. As stated in this 2014 report authored by Dave Maunsell, Praveen Tanguturi and James Hogarth:

No longer a science fiction vision, autonomous vehicles are already being actively used in industries such as mining and are expected to become a mainstream consumer phenomenon in Australia within a decade.

... Australia needs to create an open and connected environment. Such a setting should welcome and accommodate innovative self-driving cars and other forms of advanced transport.”

This legislation is the start of the journey. I know that there will be some who are cautious or even sceptical about this technology. However, I believe this can be overcome. There are, of course, insurance, privacy, technological and safety issues which need to be considered.

The bill I have presented allows for the testing of autonomous vehicles in the ACT. The bill permits the minister to approve, or refuse to approve, an autonomous vehicle trial. To approve a trial the minister must be satisfied that the applicant is able to comply with the following conditions: (1), the operator of the vehicle must hold a current drivers licence; (2), the operator of the vehicle is in the driver’s seat at all times; (3), the vehicle has an easily accessible mechanism to engage and disengage the autonomous system; (4), the vehicle has a visual indicator inside the vehicle to indicate when the autonomous system is engaged and disengaged; (5), the vehicle has a failure alert system which tells the operator when a failure is detected and allows the operator to take immediate control of the vehicle, and if the operator cannot take immediate control of the vehicle the failure system must stop the vehicle; (6), the vehicle is able to capture and store data.

Offences created in this legislation include the following: to participate in autonomous vehicle trials without approval; if a condition of approval is contravened; if a person hinders an approved trial or interferes with equipment; and if a person fails to keep or supply data.

The minister must also take all necessary steps to prevent confidential information—that is, system development, trade secrets et cetera—being released. The trial is to be reviewed two years after the legislation is passed.

The legislation will allow for autonomous vehicles on certain roads at certain times and for certain operators. It is a first step. A further legislative step would be to allow for autonomous vehicles on particular roads or lanes for the transportation of passengers.

Madam Speaker, this legislation will help pave the way for the future. Some may even say that the legislation does not go far enough. If it is indeed the will of this place, we will happily look at progressing this legislation even further. The Canberra Liberals are pleased to bring forward legislation to allow for the future of transport in Canberra, which we want to arrive in Canberra now. I urge members to support the bill.

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

Transport—light rail

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.11): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) calls on the ACT Government to not sign any contract(s) to design and build light rail with the selected consortium until after the 2016 ACT election when the ACT community will have decided if they wish the project to proceed; and
- (2) in the event the ACT Government chooses to disrespect the citizens of Canberra by entering into contracts prior to the ACT election, calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) include a termination for convenience clause;
 - (b) not allow the consortium to enter long term financial commitments for components such as rolling stock and steel; and
 - (c) require the consortium to concentrate early work on utility relocation and upgrades, depot construction and roadworks.

The opposition today calls on the ACT government to not sign contracts to build light rail until after the ACT election. This motion does not necessarily say that the government has to cancel it right away, even though that is of course what a Liberal government would do. Instead, we are simply asking that the government allow Canberrans to vote on this issue in October.

The premise is simple. If the government are retained, they can proceed with light rail. However if the Liberal Party goes into government we will simply do what we are saying we will do and we will do what we will have a mandate to do, and that is stop light rail from going ahead. This should be a common sense and rational position for this Assembly to agree to. It is undeniably the best way to respect Canberrans, their opinions, and their money. It is also the best way, I believe, to show respect to the consortium. My motion today puts the issue of light rail firmly into the hands of Canberrans and takes it away from the backroom deal done at the tail end of 2012.

Like it or not, Mr Corbell, Mr Rattenbury and their government colleagues must understand that there is a risk that this project will be terminated in October. It is something they may not like to contemplate, but it is a fact. If the Liberal Party forms a government, we will do what we would have been elected to do, and that is terminate light rail.

The Canberra Liberals could not have made our position any clearer. We have told people well in advance exactly what we will do. By doing that, we are firmly trusting Canberrans to make a decision. They can endorse the Labor government's plan for light rail, or they can endorse the Liberal opposition's approach to light rail. It is as simple as that.

We do not support light rail. Indeed, we announced our intention to not build light rail on 30 April 2014. In the 18 months prior to that we of course flagged significant concerns, and we kept saying that we would wait to see more information before we make a definitive call. But on 30 April 2014, 651 days ago, we said that we would not be going ahead with this project. We are the party that has been honest with the people of Canberra before the election. It is the Liberal opposition which is exactly saying what we will do, in contrast to the flippant \$30 million commitment made by those opposite in 2012.

It is a risk for this government to sign contracts. It is a risk financially—not for Mr Corbell or for Mr Rattenbury, but for the 150,000 ratepayers of the ACT. It is sad to see the ACT government willingly risking taxpayers' money for their own political imperative.

Ultimately the outcome that Canberrans deserve, regardless of whether light rail is built or not, is that we act prudently. We should all agree on that statement. This means that the government should not sign contracts before the next election. In a 48-month term, I believe it is absolutely unreasonable to sign contracts for a 20 or 25-year deal in month 44 of a 48-month term. This government has had 48 months to sign a contract. Even if they do claim they had a mandate, they have had 48 months to do this, and they are waiting to month 44 before they actually go ahead and do this. In effect, we will be more than 90 per cent of the way through the term before they try to bind Canberrans to the deal done in November 2012.

The issue of a mandate will be brought up by those opposite, I am sure. Through their smoke and mirrors, they will try to say that their \$30 million commitment in 2012 is a mandate to lock Canberrans into a 25-year, near \$2 billion contract. Well, we simply do not accept that. Indeed, it is a view shared by some in the community. In a post made just two days before the last ACT election, Damien Haas, the chair of ACT Light Rail, declared:

The ALP now have a policy that proposes that if they are reelected this year: They will begin an examination of constructing a light rail line with public private partnership options ... If elected again in 2016, would actually begin construction of the Gungahlin to Civic light rail link with an aim for completion by 2018. They will commit 30 million dollars over the next two years for further work on these proposals.

Furthermore, the ACT Greens commented on ACT Labor's 2012 election commitment that, "The Labor Party has only committed the money for further feasibility work." That is what the Greens said. That is what the Greens said before the election. They said that the Labor Party has only committed the money for further feasibility work. That is the truth. If you look at Treasury document No 87, the document submitted to the Treasury for costing, it is a \$30 million commitment. Incidentally, they got the costing wrong, because it ended up costing somewhat more than that because they did not treat their capital and recurrent correctly, but it was a \$30 million commitment.

This mandate issue is contentious. The sheer fact that the ABC did a story the other night suggests that it is contentious. The fact that it is contentious suggests that there is no mandate. You can hardly say that they have a mandate if it is contentious. A mandate is not contentious. A mandate is fact and they do not have a mandate, because at best it is contentious; at worst they definitely do not.

There are concerns, considerable concerns in the community, that the government does not have a mandate. The best way to rectify this is to let Canberrans decide. What is the long-term impact if they wait until October rather than June? What is the long-term impact of doing that? If they are so confident in their position, why do they

not actually hold off on light rail and tell the people of Canberra, “Because you love it so much, you are going to have to vote for us if you want to get light rail”?

Instead, they are so cautious about their position, they are so concerned about the position, as the union polling states, they have to lock it in beforehand and try and hold Canberrans to ransom because they do not back themselves to take it to an election. That is the truth. They do not want a referendum on light rail. They do not want a plebiscite on light rail. They do not want the people of Canberra to have their say on light rail because they are worried what they will get back. We on this side are not worried about Canberrans having their say. We are not worried about enfranchising the people of Canberra to determine the fate of the biggest proposed infrastructure spending in our city’s history or in the territory’s self-governance history.

The changes to this project since 2012 have been far reaching. First, the capital cost of the project has increased significantly. There is also approximately \$150 million of associated expenditure. In addition to that, there is, of course, a 20 or 25-year deal where there will be extreme operating costs and extreme finance costs. The capital metro full business case has also been challenged since its release in October 2014. Most recently on the weekend Dr Leo Dobes warns against the use of wider economic benefits in the business case.

The second part of my motion calls on the ACT government to include a terminate for convenience clause in the light rail contract. If they are going to go ahead and do this, if they are going to disrespect the people of Canberra, they should at least ensure that the people of Canberra will not be disadvantaged considerably if, indeed, Canberrans do not want the government to proceed with this project.

It is a reasonable position. The only reason that a Liberal government would be seeking to terminate the contract would be if we were elected to do so. It is as simple as that. Those opposite and light rail supporters can say that it is a travesty but the facts are that we are making our position clear. The only reason, the only circumstance, in which light rail contracts would be terminated would be if the Canberra Liberals were elected to do it. It is as simple as that, Madam Speaker.

Termination for convenience clauses are standard clauses in government contracts. Such a clause is desirable to governments of all persuasions. Mr Corbell has stated publicly that the contract will include this standard clause and I hope the Assembly can place on the record our desire to see such a clause included in any light rail contract foolishly entered into before the election.

The second part of the motion today is a pragmatic response to this arrogant government. The government is pushing ahead with signing contracts before October. It is an arrogant move. It is a move that, of course, neglects the considerable concerns of so many Canberrans. The reality is that if it does go ahead, does charge ahead and tries to bind future generations of Canberrans to their deal done in November 2012, we at least hope that they will have the decency to negotiate with the consortium some very reasonable terms such as not going into long-term supply contracts for things such as the rolling stock or steel.

The truth is that the project is not going to be disadvantaged if they hold off on those larger procurements until after October. It is not uncommon. Contracts like this often have trigger points where certain things are allowed to happen and certain expenditures take place. Therefore, we are saying: include a trigger for a big acquisition such as the rolling stock, steel and other procurements until after October of this year.

It is a reasonable position. Even if they are going to charge ahead, they can still do utility relocations; they can still do earthworks; they can still do the depot; they can still do road and intersection upgrades. But we are simply saying, “Hold off on the long-term procurements until after the election.” If they were doing the decent thing by Canberrans and the decent thing by the consortium, those trigger points would be included in the contract.

The opposition makes no secret of the fact that we see investing in the bus network as the best way to serve our dispersed population in the short to mid-term. We believe that investing in ACTION is the most cost-effective way to improve public transport in Canberra. Of course, this is a view shared by the former environment and sustainability directorate, the government’s adviser in this area, as well as Infrastructure Australia, an independent statutory body. They have also advised government to this effect.

What the opposition is calling for today is for the government to respect the people of Canberra, to respect the decisions and the choices that they make by holding off on signing contracts until after October. But in the event that that is not possible, we simply say: make sure that there are trigger points beyond October before the big procurements take place to ensure that Canberrans are not at a considerable disadvantage financially as a result of this government going ahead with their flawed project.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Capital Metro, Minister for Health, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change) (10.25): Madam Speaker, before the last election this Labor government put a written policy position to the people of Canberra. It was announced clearly and unequivocally by the then Chief Minister and me. It was covered comprehensively by all of the media outlets in this city on that day and the weeks that followed preceding polling day in 2012.

Let me restate what that commitment was. ACT Labor committed to “plan, finance and develop the first stage of a light rail network” with “construction estimated to commence in 2016”. The statement issued on 21 September by the then Chief Minister and me said:

Stage 1 is anticipated to be completed by 2018 with construction estimated to commence in 2016.

The government went on to say at that time that it would be delivered through the ACT’s first large-scale public-private partnership. We made it clear that the upfront

capital construction costs would be borne by the private sector through the PPP framework. As Mr Coe knows and as the opposition know, the costs of a PPP only come to be incurred by the taxpayer through the availability payments regime when the project is complete. The costings set out by the government at the time were clear, unequivocal and signed off by the Treasury. So let us be very, very clear about that.

But, more importantly than any of this detail around the discussion, what this government is doing with light rail is what we said we would do. Because after years—nay, decades—of debate and equivocation and umming and ahing about whether or not urban rail was right for our city, this government took a decision. We took a decision and we put it to the people as part of our policy platform. Ever since that day, in every sitting in this place, in every commitment this government has made we have made clear for nearly the past four years that this year would be the year we would sign contracts for the construction delivery of this project—every year for the last four years. Those opposite have had nearly four years to demonstrate what their alternative vision is for light rail. What have we got? We have got a half-baked options paper for Northbourne Avenue and that is it. That is it—no other comprehensive transport policy response for the people of Canberra.

Now the Liberals say they think buses are a better option, but they have never committed to any priority measures for buses to make sure they actually do not get stuck in traffic jams. They have never committed to it, because the real colour of the Liberals' money when it comes to transport policy was highlighted in the comments made by Mr Coe in the introductory speech for the bill he presented this morning—that is, the simple but false proposition that our city is a dispersed city built for the car and we should just accept it. Well, there lies the path to congestion and delay and loss of productivity and pollution and loss of amenity and noise and all of the challenges that come with a congested, car-based city. But that is their policy position, clear and unequivocal: “We’re just about cars.”

We saw it at the last election too, where their only transport policy was to build more car parks and duplicate more works. That was it. When every other city globally recognises that you cannot build more roads to build your way out of your transport problems, the Liberals wanted to dig us deeper into that hole.

We have some choices to make as a city, and this government is prepared to give those choices to the people of Canberra. We are prepared to say that public transport has to be high quality, has to be convenient, has to be frequent and has to be a real competitor to the use of the private motor vehicle. Public transport should not be second class; it should be first class. That is what we are attempting to deliver through the light rail project, through the establishment of transport Canberra and through all the reforms this government is driving to improve public transport in our city.

What those opposite say is that unless you have a car you are a second-class citizen and you do not have the right to good mobility around your city. That is their position. Well, we reject their position absolutely.

We have heard the proposition from those opposite that somehow there is no harm to be done by simply delaying the commencement of construction of this project. Well,

how wrong they are. Do they seriously think the private sector partner will continue to deliver light rail at the same cost they bid in November last year in 12 months time? If contracts are not signed until November or December—almost a year after they bid their price—do the Liberals seriously think the price is going to be the same? We have very clear advice from leading national business figures—people like Jennifer Westacott, the head of the Business Council of Australia, and others. Jennifer Westacott has said very clearly that cancelling light rail contracts is false economy because the private sector will simply price that risk into future contracts for future projects.

So that is the recklessness we have from those opposite. We already know that their federal Liberal counterparts regard them as economic lunatics—economic lunatics—for wanting to tear up contracts. They have been urged by some of the leading national business figures in the country to refrain from this economic lunacy. Every other Liberal government in the country repudiates their position, but they continue with it.

We saw the extent of the recklessness embodied in the Liberals' approach in the interview Mr Coe gave on ABC TV last week. He could not answer the question on how much his policy was going to cost, but he said, "That doesn't matter. I don't care how much it costs. I'm going to do it." Is this the approach we expect from those opposite? Is this the approach we expect from a potential future government of the territory? "Our policy is we don't know how much our policy costs, but we're going to implement it anyway." No wonder their federal counterparts consider them reckless and economic lunatics.

This government has been clear and unequivocal from the beginning—we want to see better public transport for our city, and we are starting on one of the busiest and most congested corridors in our city. That corridor has been assessed by Infrastructure Australia itself as one of the most congested in our city. It needs to be addressed and it needs to be addressed in a manner befitting the significance of that corridor as the front door to the national capital.

We are investing in a piece of infrastructure that will deliver guaranteed reliable and frequent public transport services for the next 25 to 50 to 80 years. As congestion continues to grow on the roads, as more and more people continue to try to get to and from work in the mornings, light rail will still be there in 2025, in 2035 and in 2045, delivering exactly the same journey times and transporting people quickly, reliably and frequently to their destinations. We are bringing some of the largest urban rail operators nationally and internationally to our city, bringing their expertise and skills and experience, to make this a world-class project that all Canberrans can enjoy.

We heard from those opposite that apparently we should have signed contracts two years ago or three years ago. That seemed to be part of Mr Coe's argument. Does he seriously think that delivering a large-scale infrastructure project like this occurs with six months worth of planning? The answer is simply that it does not. That again highlights the naivety and the recklessness of the shadow minister and his failure to understand the significant effort, planning, analysis and work that needs to be undertaken to deliver this type of infrastructure project. It is called an infrastructure pipeline for a reason: it takes time to develop it, to grow it, to finalise it.

We have delivered in a significant period of time a world-class project that has attracted world-class bidders. We have now selected a preferred bidder who is going to deliver this project at less than the government estimated as the capital construction cost and in a quicker period of time. We have those opposite saying, “Oh, this is going to be a billion-dollar light rail. \$783 million is completely unrealistic. It’s going to cost more than that.” It is going to cost nearly \$100 million less than that, Madam Speaker. That is the outcome of this government’s process. And it is going to be delivered more quickly and in a shorter period of time than that which the government estimated.

Those opposite want to deny Canberrans all of these benefits. They want the cost to go up, because even delaying will see an increase in cost. They want to deny Canberrans who use public transport first-class public transport; they want to keep treating them as second-class citizens. They think that building more roads is a way of building ourselves out of our problem when all the evidence everywhere is to the contrary. They want to put at risk Canberra’s reputation as a place to do business. They want to put new costs onto new infrastructure projects in the future that will be there if they cancel contracts like this one, because the private sector will factor in the risk in their future contracts.

That is the contrast, Madam Speaker. This government is doing what it was elected to do and what it said it would do. And it is not just what it said it would do before the election but what it has said every day, every month, every year since the election. We are getting on with delivering light rail because light rail delivers the quality of public transport infrastructure our city needs, not just for the next five years but for the next 25 years, for the next 55 years. That is the investment we are making.

The only ones who have no alternative vision, no alternative policy, no alternative plan except to say no are those opposite. They need to justify to the people of Canberra why they think a blank cheque to cancel a contract and to deliver nothing is a sufficient policy position for them to go to the election on.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.41): My position on this topic is clear, and I have had plenty of opportunities to spell it out on the previous occasions that Mr Coe has raised permutations of today’s motion. I will not be supporting a position that cancels or defers light rail, because this is an excellent and important project for our city now and into the future. Governments need to get on with projects like these, building the infrastructure that we need, planning for our population growth and urban challenges, and showing vision for how we want Canberra to work in the next decades.

My vision, and the vision of the ACT Greens, is for a Canberra that is sustainable, livable, friendly to people and friendly to the environment. Light rail provides a great foundation, especially in a planning and transport sense, for creating that kind of city. It is high quality public transport, powered by renewable energy, very attractive to commuters, and built in a critical Canberra corridor that is experiencing increasing growth and congestion pressures.

Of course, light rail will not alone turn Canberra into a perfect city; it is merely one element of a whole range of social, environmental and economic projects and policies that I would like to see achieved in the ACT. Some of these are well underway—such as our renewable energy targets or great social projects like Common Ground. Others still need a lot of work.

This is one of the reasons I am amused whenever Mr Coe says, “The Greens and the government are so obsessed about light rail; all they think about is light rail.” In fact, the contrary is the case. It is just one of many policies and projects that I and other members of the government are working on. It seems that the only person who is obsessed with light rail is Mr Coe. It is quite clearly the case; he talks of nothing else because he wants light rail to be his election campaign.

Other Australian cities have been enjoying the transformational benefits that light rail can bring and they give us a glimpse of benefits our city may experience in the future. Members may have seen reports this week on the continuing success of the Gold Coast light rail. In 18 months it has notched up 10 million trips. These patronage levels have surpassed expectations, and they are up almost 30 per cent compared to the same six-month period in 2014. The second stage of the Gold Coast light rail is on track to start construction in April. That stage was supported by Malcolm Turnbull, who has invited the ACT to submit a funding proposal for an extension of the light rail to Russell.

The ACT’s capital metro project has progressed steadily in this term of the Assembly. Together the Greens and the Labor Party, as part of this government, have moved methodically through the sensible steps required to build a successful light rail project. It follows from our parliamentary agreement and our pre-election commitments to build light rail in this term of government. The plan was aired thoroughly before the 2012 election, first through Greens announcements and then also with the Labor Party making their policies, which they have reiterated in recent days in great detail. The opposition knows these things to be true. In fact there are numerous documents and news stories that demonstrate this position. History cannot be rewritten, much as Mr Coe and his colleagues might try. As one example, today I was looking at a story on the ABC from September 2012 on “light rail promise” and it clearly highlighted the commitment to build light rail after the 2012 election.

I would like to put on the record my congratulations to the winning consortium on the capital metro project—Canberra Metro. The announcement of the partnership with Canberra Metro is very exciting news for our city. The members of the Canberra Metro consortium bring a wealth of experience and expertise and are committed to working with the government to create a fantastic light rail project. An advantage of public-private partnerships is the potential for experienced private sector partners to bring expertise and innovation to the project, and I am confident that with Canberra Metro we will get just that. I would like also to thank all the bidders, including the unsuccessful short-listed bidder, who I know provided a high quality and competitive bid.

Of course, as we all know now, the price to build light rail, as offered by Canberra Metro, is significantly cheaper than the conservative and prudent estimation provided through the capital metro business case. Here is another example of Liberal Party scaremongering exposed. All the exaggeration—the rounding up and the casual mention of a “billion dollar project”—has been proven wrong. I have not heard anyone have the good grace to say that they were wrong; I have simply heard more shrill, more desperate proclamations, coming from Mr Coe in particular but from other members of the opposition, as the good news stories roll out about the quality of the consortium, the competitive price that has been delivered and the highly improved timetable for delivery of the project. All of these things are good news stories. Yet in the face of that good news, we simply see more and more desperate opposition coming from those on the Liberal Party benches.

I want to pick up on a particular point of Mr Coe’s motion which says that entering a light rail contract would be disrespecting the citizens of Canberra. First of all, light rail is a project for the long-term future of Canberra, for the citizens that live and travel here now and the citizens that will need to live and travel here in the future. It is the first part of a sustainable transport network; it is transport for people who want or need to travel on public transport; it is a catalyst for economic and city development; it is a way to address the pressure of the continued growth of this city; it is an environmentally friendly project, running on 100 per cent renewable energy. These are positive policies to meet the needs of Canberra citizens. The Canberra Liberals, who are not interested in things like sustainable transport or renewable energy, think it is disrespectful to the citizens of Canberra to advance these kinds of policies. I simply disagree, for all the reasons I have just outlined. This is about delivering for the citizens of Canberra.

I particularly welcome the comments made by Mr Corbell this morning. I think he made a very powerful point in arguing that the Canberra Liberals have a view that if you do not have a car you are a second-class citizen. That absolutely underlines the philosophical approach that has been taken here. The car is king as far as the Canberra Liberals are concerned; and bad luck to you if you do not want to drive, you cannot drive or you cannot afford to drive. I do not share that view that the Canberra Liberals have; I am determined that this city will provide transport for all of its citizens, not just those who choose the private motor vehicle.

The benefits that the project brings to Canberra are, of course, backed up by the capital metro business case, with its positive benefit-cost ratio. There will be millions of dollars worth of benefits delivered to Canberrans. The only way I have heard the Liberals try to rebut the cold facts of the business case is by attacking the case itself, even though it was done by leaders in the field to best practice standards.

I have a different view on what is disrespectful to Canberra citizens. It is disrespectful for the Liberal Party to have no plan for the future of growth and environmental and transport challenges in Canberra. It is disrespectful of the Canberra Liberals to commit to voiding the light rail contract and throwing away what is likely to be a substantial amount of money and work that has already been delivered. That is an amazingly disrespectful thing to do with taxpayers’ money. That money will be

wasted, spent on nothing. The recent transcripts of Mr Coe's increasingly extreme statements have him promising to tear up the light rail contract even though he does not know what the cost will be. This is reckless in the extreme. In the coming months Canberrans will have time to fully digest what it would mean to tear up a contract in this way. We have already heard clear examples of that—not only the impact of the direct cost of tearing up the contract but the impact on Canberra's reputation and the failure to deliver the important transport infrastructure that we need.

We should be very clear about this. Sometimes I have heard the Liberal Party, in their less extreme moments, saying, "Maybe five or 10 years down the track we will need it." If we do not deliver this project now, if this gets cancelled now, it will never happen in Canberra. I think we can boldly make that prediction—certainly in the lifetimes of anybody in this place.

This promise of the Liberals has understandably attracted heavy criticism from the business community, from those involved in infrastructure and even from their own party. Some of the more interesting quotes that members may have heard include the infamous "economic lunatics" from the federal Liberals and "The Canberra Liberals are dead-set wrong on this" from Infrastructure Partnerships Australia. I suggest that this is a legacy that will not be forgotten any time soon and can only undermine the reputation of the Canberra Liberals for a very long time to come.

Having made a ridiculous and reckless threat to renege on a major contract and waste millions of dollars, the Liberals now claim it is incumbent on the government to stall the project. That is simply foolish. The burden is not on the government to cease governing and cease building the infrastructure our city needs. The burden is on the Liberal members in here to cease making reckless threats to irresponsibly waste taxpayers' money.

I note the discussion of the point Mr Coe sought to make this morning about the contract to be signed in month 44 of this term. Of course, it takes time to prepare these documents, to work through the bidding process and to do the work that needs to be done to make sure that this is a well-costed, well-thought-through, well-designed, well-planned project. I am interested to know what the cut-off is. Is it month 40? Is it month 38? When is it appropriate to sign the contract? And the corollary is: how many risks and how many corners should be cut to get inside some arbitrary time frame where Mr Coe thinks that it is not okay to sign a contract anymore? It does take a lot of time. It has been three years or so of solid work to get to this point. That is the time frame of these projects. You cannot stop and start, stutter your way along; you have to get on with the project. This is the time frame the government has been working to, and it is the time frame the government intends to stick to.

I would not support Mr Coe, through this motion, dictating the terms of the critical light rail contract, as he seeks to do in the second part of his motion. The contract will be negotiated and formed by professionals, by people who will be pursuing the best interests of Canberra and the project. The political interests of the Liberal Party will not be one of their considerations.

Also keep in mind that inherent in the Liberal Party's vehement campaign against stage 1 of light rail is that it also means we will not have stage 2 of light rail. Nor will we have stage 3. There will be no extension to Russell, no light rail for Belconnen, Woden, Tuggeranong, the airport, Weston Creek and Molonglo. There are no future stages without stage 1. Canberrans all over the city should know that the local Liberal Party are not opposing stage 1 of light rail; they are opposing the idea of a high quality renewable energy public transport spine for all of the ACT. That is what happens. If you cancel stage 1, nobody else will ever see that.

One of the bits of community feedback I have heard is that people say, "I like light rail; I wish I was getting it first." I kind of accept that position. What that says to me is that people want to see it in this city and there is a certain jealousy about the fact that it is going to one part of town first. But it has to go to somewhere first. If the Liberals prevail with the position that they are taking, nobody else in Canberra will see light rail either, whereas the Greens and the Labor Party have made it quite clear in the master plan for light rail across the city that there is a vision for long-term delivery right across this city.

Mr Coe's comments about abandoning or pausing the project bring to mind the statements of now Senator Zed Seselja when he was the leader of the Canberra Liberals. Before the last election, Mr Seselja criticised the Labor and Greens parties for a lack of action on light rail. Mr Seselja said:

They are not prepared to do the study; they are not prepared to do the work. They promise it at every election ... And they will have to look the electorate in the eye and tell them why they did not get it done.

That was what Mr Seselja said. Mr Coe is now saying that the government needs to stop taking action or we will have to look the electorate in the eye and tell them why we did get it done. Which is it? Are we too slow on light rail or too fast on light rail? Mr Seselja notes in his comments, as it is interesting to reflect, that "They promise it at every election." To come in here and say the community has not had a discussion about this, as the Canberra Liberals seek to do—well, that is not what Mr Seselja thought in 2012. He was bemoaning that it was not happening fast enough, that people were not taking serious action.

This government has committed to taking serious action. We have done the three years of work, and we are at the point of fruition of all that hard work. We are starting to deliver this project on the ground for the people of Canberra.

On the question of whether it is too slow or too fast, the real answer is that it is neither. It is just that the Liberals have to oppose whatever initiative is promoted by the government or the Greens. It is why, over time, we see strange contradictions occurring in their policies. Mr Seselja says, "Why are you so slow on light rail?" Mr Coe says, "Why are you so fast on light rail?" The Canberra Liberals say, "Do not ban plastic bags," yet Liberals in other states push on to ban plastic bags because they know it is the right policy. Malcolm Turnbull praises the ACT for its progressive and courageous tax reform while the Canberra Liberals oppose these reforms. They oppose, and therefore they are.

There is an approach of negativity, opposition and scaremongering, much as we saw with Tony Abbott, with his anti-carbon price campaign. That is what we are seeing here: pick a single issue; create a whole lot of scare stories about it; run it as hard as you can at the election; hide the fact that you have not got much else to say—no real policy platform, no clear agenda. We saw where that got Tony Abbott. We saw that—

Mr Coe: Elected.

MR RATTENBURY: It got him elected on a false premise. If that is where you want to go, that is fine: that is your personal integrity; so be it. But we also saw what happened to Tony Abbott in the long run; we know where he is now.

Canberrans do not want that. They want a serious, stable government that delivers good infrastructure for this city in a timely manner, in a well-costed manner. That is exactly what we are doing. I will not be supporting Mr Coe's motion today, because it simply lets Canberra down. *(Time expired.)*

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.56): I rise to support Mr Coe's very well thought through motion and his continued advocacy on behalf of ACT ratepayers. Ultimately, that is who we stand here to represent—not the international consortiums; not the people who are advocating on behalf of the consortium. We ask: what is it that the ACT ratepayer wants? Let us take this to the election and let us have the ACT ratepayer make the decision, because at the moment the government are seemingly acting in the interests of themselves, of the Greens and of the international consortium—as opposed to the ratepayer.

A similar conundrum was faced in Victoria recently. Much has been said about that but, ultimately, when the voters of Victoria, with the facts before them, had to make a decision, they decided in favour of Labor and what is now the Andrews government. They did not like the fact that there was a government that essentially was signing contracts and riding roughshod over the community, over their democratic rights. I think this is a very important point: people want to have their say because they do not believe the government.

The ACT government stand here today making assertions and claims similar to the claims that they made about the dam. It was this government that said the dam would be built for \$140 million. The ratepayer of the ACT, ultimately, is paying out over \$400 million. It was Mr Corbell who said that the jail would cost \$110 million. It must be approaching \$200 million now. It was Mr Corbell that said we were building it with 300 beds and that would be enough capacity in its current configuration for 25 years. That simply was not true. The jail is now bursting at its seams with well over 300 inmates.

The government failed to tell the truth and get their numbers right on the GDE. We saw the hospital car park more than double in price. There is the secure mental health facility that Mr Corbell promised to open five years ago. It was meant to be open five years ago at a cost of \$11 million. They said they were going to build a new tower block at the Canberra Hospital for \$800 million. That has gone off the table. The

money has been ripped out of the budget. There is the Belconnen hospital, Madam Speaker. They went to the last election and said, “We will give you 200 beds there.” They reduced that to 140. They still will not tell us what the full cost of light rail will be over 20 years. I am not sure if we are going to believe it, but there is a figure. What is the full cost over 20 years? They still will not tell the community. The bush healing farm is another example. There are countless examples.

The problem for this Labor government is that the people of the ACT have stopped believing them. They do not trust them. When the Labor government here say a figure, people out there in the community say, “Well, you can double that.” We know from history and real examples that if this government say a figure, double it at least, because that will be the sad reality. You can probably add two or three years to the time line to build the infrastructure program as well.

The question of the mandate is an interesting one. It seems to be an argument back and forth. There are quotes—and Mr Coe read them out—of where the community was at on the eve of the 2012 election. The greatest advocate for light rail in this town is Damien Haas and he is used regularly by the government to promote their cause. On the eve of the 2012 election he made it very clear on his blog that he put out that the government had only committed to a feasibility study. That was his view. That was the view of the ACT’s greatest advocate for light rail, the person that took most attention and had most to gain from the light rail policy.

It was the view of Amanda Bresnan. Amanda Bresnan said that the government had only committed to a feasibility study. The Greens and the advocate thought it was just a feasibility study. The community and the ACT Treasury believed that because the policy submitted by the Labor Party to Treasury was the \$30 million for a feasibility study. The Greens and the light rail advocate said that, and that was what was put into ACT Treasury as their costed policy.

The problem for the community, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the view that the government has stopped listening to them. This is something that happens to governments when they are old, when they have been around for 15 years. They stop listening to the community; they listen to themselves. They do what they want rather what the community wants them to do and they forget that it is the ratepayers’ money. It is the community’s money that this government is playing with. This is not Simon Corbell’s money. This is not Shane Rattenbury’s money. This is the money of the ratepayers of the ACT. The government is going to commit the ratepayers of the ACT to hundreds of millions of dollars of expenditure without a mandate, without taking it to the people. If the government is so sure that this is what the community wants, why does it not take it to the election?

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MR HANSON: Why are they so scared, Madam Deputy Speaker? Why are they so scared?

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, resume your seat. Stop the clock, please. Mr Corbell and Mr Coe, let us not have a yelling match across the chamber. I cannot possibly hear what Mr Hanson is saying. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Our clear position is that this should go to the election, but it seems that this government is going to ride roughshod over the community, which I think is disgraceful. If it does so, we put it on notice that it needs to make sure that in writing any contract it does so in the best interests of the community. Should the community at the election say, “No, we don’t want light rail to proceed,” and they vote Liberal to express that sentiment, then what we do not want is a government which is trying to write contracts which are punitive and in the interests of the consortium, not the ratepayer.

At the moment it seems that the government think that the winners out of this are themselves and the international consortium. Who do they quote to back up their case? Jamie Briggs. That is the person they think they should be taking their economic advice from. I think it is fair to say that if you are taking your economic advice from Jamie Briggs, as Simon Corbell and Shane Rattenbury are, it probably explains why the ACT is in the trouble it is in with debt and deficit. I would say to Mr Rattenbury: take a look at who your friends are. You are very selective. I would caution you. I would say that, rather than quoting Mr Briggs, you should look to what Ms Bresnan said on the eve of the last election and look to what Damien Haas said on the eve of the last election but, more importantly, look to what the people are saying.

If you do not believe us, look to the union polling. What is that telling you? It is a clear indication that the community is very concerned about this project. There are those who support it but, equally, there are many more who oppose it. The right way to proceed—if, as Mr Rattenbury is saying, this is just the first of many phases—is to take the community with you. Go to the community and say, “This is our plan. This is what we think is the right way to go. Come with us on this journey.” Why would they not do so if they are so convinced that this is the right way to go? The problem, as they know and we know, is that the community does not want this.

The clear choice that has emerged out of all of this debate is to say to the people of the ACT in 2016, “Do you want hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of your money spent on a tram? Do you want your rates to go through the roof to pay for it? Or instead would you rather a Canberra Liberal government which will invest in health, education, local services and infrastructure across all of Canberra and in public transport across all of Canberra?” That is the clear choice that is arising out of this. If and when we take government I will leave you with the very clear message that we will not proceed with light rail. There should be no doubt.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (11.06), in reply: To conclude the debate, the opposition is unfortunately not surprised by the decision of those opposite to not support this very reasonable motion. Going to the crude politics of this, I am just amazed that they are so confident in their position yet they do not actually want to have an election based on it. It is interesting, isn’t it? Because if they are so confident that light rail is a winner, why do they not hold off until October and say, “The only way you are going

to get light rail is if you vote for Labor again”? They do not do that because they know it is not popular and it is not supported by the people who are going to have to pay for it. They figure they are going to have a better chance of re-election not if they promote light rail but if they promote the negativity of a termination cost. They think they are going to have a better chance of being re-elected if they promote holding Canberrans to ransom rather than the core issue itself.

It is very interesting that they do not want to have an election on this. It is very informative, just like this whole issue. Originally it was a transport solution and then they started to tone that down. Then it was all about a planning solution—it was going to revitalise things—and that started to get toned down as well. Now they are in the job space, but that is starting to get toned down as well because it is not really plausible. Finally, the last resort is bagging out the Liberals. That is all we ever hear about light rail from those opposite: bagging out the Liberals.

We simply say that the people of Canberra should be the arbiters of the future of light rail, not the backroom deal done between those opposite and the Greens. I think it is a reasonable position. Why do the government not simply put this on hold until October? If the government are so confident that it is popular, if they are so confident that it is in the best interests of Canberrans to go ahead with this project, why do they not put it to the election? By the way they talk, they will romp it in; they are so popular they will get 20 or 25 seats. Maybe they are not so popular.

We have a government that committed to \$30 million of expenditure, yet now are going to bind generations of Canberrans to perhaps \$2 billion of expenditure by way of construction, finance costs and operating expenses. The government said that they will only be paying through availability payments once the project is done. That is simply not true. The government have already spent \$50 million on this project and they have said they are going to put a down payment of \$375 million in capital. Where was that in the election promise? Where was the \$375 million down payment? Mr Corbell just said, “We are only going to be paying through availability payments.” That is just not correct because the government have said there is going to be a down payment, a capital up-front payment of \$375 million. Minister Corbell was wrong. He was wrong when he said that you only pay through availability payments because there is going to be a capital down payment. That was not in the election promise, nor was the \$50 million of associated works which has already been done, let alone the additional \$100 million of associated works which is going to be done.

There is still no talk about the operating cost of light rail. Why do the government not say how much it is going to cost to operate the tram? Why do they not say what the embedded interest rate is? In effect, the government are borrowing the cost of construction off the consortium, minus \$375 million. The remainder is, in effect, being financed by the consortium and we will be paying interest to the consortium. What is that interest rate? What is the embedded finance rate in the contract and why will they not say what it is? Are we ever going to find out what this rate is? Or come June are they going to say, “It’s commercial-in-confidence and we’ll just let the next 20 or 25 years of Canberra ratepayers sort it out.” This is a travesty.

It is interesting that Mr Rattenbury should point to the success of the Gold Coast. Let us not forget that when this system was committed to by the Labor state government and the Labor commonwealth government they promised 50,000 people a day. They are now getting 20,000. At the time of the commitment it was 50,000 people a day; they are now getting 20,000 people a day. When the Newman government got in they looked at the business case and said, “Actually, you’re not going to get 50,000; it’s probably going to start off at 17,000.” That is exactly where it did start off and now they are at 20,000—less than half the projected patronage at the time of committing to the project. It would be interesting to note whether, if the original business case had said 20,000 passengers a day, not 50,000 passengers a day, it would have been built. Who knows?

Minister Corbell, of course, claims to be this great champion of light rail. Of course, he has not always had this position. He has not always been this avid supporter of light rail, which suggests that at some point he had this coming of age. At some point he had a conversion where he went from being a rational public transport planner, by way of buses, trains, trams or private vehicles, into this light rail mode. It is interesting to consider when that could have been. It just so happens that it was after the 2012 election that this real coming of age came about. After all, it was this minister, Minister Corbell, who repeatedly said in this place that the light rail system here in the ACT was just not viable. In actual fact, he had a go at the Greens on numerous occasions for their blind support of light rail. Let us go to a quote of Minister Corbell:

It is interesting looking at the latest light rail project currently under development in Australia, the Gold Coast light rail system, where there is actually community opposition to light rail. That opposition is based on concerns about land acquisition for the light rail corridor and also about the costs and the impact on interchanging between bus services and light rail.

There is a community group there arguing that instead of building light rail, bus rapid transit should be built because it will take less land. It will mean less interchanging between bus services and the light rail vehicle and, therefore, less inconvenience for commuters. So there are a range of choices open to governments and a range of policy considerations that need to be kept in mind in looking into these issues.

Madam Assistant Speaker, the government did not have an open mind. The government were not objective. They simply did a deal with the Greens. I find it hard to believe that there was not considerable opposition within the Labor Party caucus about this project. I find it very hard to believe that there still is not robust discussion in the Labor Party caucus about this. We all know that the vast majority of Canberrans will always be left out when it comes to light rail, even in Gungahlin. Palmerston, Crace, Nicholls, Ngunnawal, Casey, Amaroo, Forde, Bonner, Throsby, Jacka, Moncrieff—they are never getting light rail. They are never going to have a light rail system within walking distance. They are always going to be treated as second-class citizens as a result of this selfish decision.

So, even though these people are supposedly the beneficiaries of it, they are actually not. The vast majority of people in Gungahlin will be worse off as a result of this project, be it through cancelled public transport, road congestion or the serious inconveniences during construction—let alone having to foot the bill for all this as well. Of course, hundreds of thousands of other Canberrans are in exactly the same situation. We call on the government to take a reasonable approach to this light rail contract and to support our motion.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8		Noes 9	
Mr Coe	Ms Lawder	Mr Barr	Ms Fitzharris
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Jones		Mr Corbell	

Question so resolved in the negative.

Restorative justice

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (11.20): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the long and fruitful history of restorative approaches in Canberra, starting with ACT Policing-led conferencing in the 1990s and including the ground-breaking RISE (Re-Integrative Shaming Experiments) which led to a global proliferation of restorative justice programs and research;
- (b) the success of the ACT Government delivering phase one of the restorative justice scheme which enabled the Restorative Justice Unit to manage referrals for young people who have committed less serious crimes;
- (c) more than a decade of valuable service from the Restorative Justice Unit to people affected by crime in the ACT community;
- (d) the funding commitment of \$2.1 million over four years for phase two which will allow the Restorative Justice Unit to manage referrals for young people and adults, including for serious matters;
- (e) the ongoing efforts of the ACT Government to expand restorative justice into the ACT community as a viable alternative to traditional responses to conflict and harmful behaviour;

- (f) the ongoing efforts of ACT schools adopting restorative practices to promote effective and peaceful conflict resolution in these primary sites of socialisation; and
 - (g) the success of the Restorative Communities Conference in July 2015, and the well attended inaugural Restorative Communities Network meeting in November 2015, which demonstrated an international and local enthusiasm to see Canberra continue as a leading innovator of restorative practices; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to work towards the declaration of Canberra as a restorative city, which will confirm its commitment to exploring and implementing creative solutions to shared problems using restorative processes and continue the ACT's vision for safer, more connected communities.

It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on this most critical matter. As some of you already know, I am a passionate advocate for restorative justice and I truly believe in its potential for the community and beyond. Not only does it provide a way of restoration when someone or something has been harmed but it also gives the person or persons who have offended or caused the harm a way of being restored themselves. It gives those who experience harm and pain a voice. It helps those who harm others to hear those voices, to understand more clearly the impact of their actions, which they often carry out without any thought. I would gladly use up all of my time here today telling stories of when a victim of crime comes face to face with their offender and the results are life-changing for all parties.

The old paradigm of locking someone away from society is not effective in stopping re-offending and reducing crime. In January 2001 I met with Steve Love, Deputy Chief Constable and leader of the Restorative Justice Unit in the Thames Valley Police Service in the UK and I asked him, "Do prisons work?" He replied, "Yes, jail works, as long as the person is in jail. After that, it doesn't work." I was somewhat surprised by that answer, because I knew that he was an advocate for restorative justice. The first part of his answer really shocked me but then I got to understand what he was talking about. How effective is it to arrest, punish and release a person when there is no effort taken to restore or rehabilitate? Fortunately, we do not have that type of system here in the ACT.

I was most impressed with the extensive restorative justice unit in the Thames Valley Police Service commanded by Chief Constable Sir Charles Pollard, after the then home secretary, Jack Straw, at the time saw the results of an ordinary court case compared with the restorative justice conference and decided to substantially fund RJ. The unit Steve Love commanded had five other senior police officers, each responsible for a separate aspect such as community disputes, police complaints, restorative justice in schools and justice matters.

I am proud to say that Canberra has come a long way with restorative justice practice, particularly in the justice system, which saw the re-integrative shaming experiments or RISE commence in 1995, fuelling an international appetite for more restorative

justice programs and research. The ACT is internationally recognised for our restorative justice work, and those involved should be proud of this achievement. Following the RISE project the ACT government introduced phase 1 of the restorative justice program which diverted from the criminal system young people who committed less serious crimes. This shows outstanding results.

Subsequently I worked with the attorney to find ways to help Indigenous young people to take up restorative justice opportunity when offered, and an Indigenous guidance partner was introduced, again with outstanding results. As I said, we already have, thanks to this government and to Minister Corbell, phase 1, enabling restorative justice units to manage young people who have committed less serious crimes.

Last year this government celebrated a major milestone when the ACT Restorative Justice Unit celebrated a decade of operation. Following on from the benefits of stage 1, this government will invest \$2.1 million over the next four years to introduce phase 2 of restorative justice for young people and for adults, including for more serious matters.

I have enjoyed working with Minister Corbell in this important policy area, and I know we will both continue to advocate for such matters long after we both leave this place. I know, we both know, the ACT will make a fantastic restorative city. I also congratulate all those in the Restorative Justice Unit and the directorate for their commitment in providing a safe and empowering voluntary justice process that greatly benefits those participating in it as well as the greater community.

Furthermore, restorative justice is not only making a positive impact in our criminal law system but its practice is also embedded in our ACT public schools. I remember it firstly in Charnwood Public School, now Charnwood-Dunlop, and more lately at Kingsford Smith School which, through successive principals, has employed restorative justice to make a difference to the growing school which has faced many challenges in the past.

People in this place may remember that shortly after this school was first opened and the new principal was appointed, unfortunately the principal fell very seriously ill and was replaced by another principal, and that principal was replaced by the first principal coming back, and then again, after a period, he stood down and another principal was selected. Further to that, that principal was actually moved into the directorate because of his considerable skills and a new principal, Jan Day, was then selected to replace him. So you can see they went through a series of principals in a very short space of time.

I thank the immediate past principal, Jan Day, for her innovative ways in utilising restorative practice for the benefit of the school students and teachers, other staff and the wider school community. I have heard only good news from her and from her staff, and I would like to see more schools adopt restorative justice programs to enable restorative justice approaches to behavioural challenges in particular. It takes strong leadership and commitment by the whole school. However, the benefits will speak for themselves.

Restorative justice practices are also being advocated in other areas. Just recently, in relation to the review of the Retirement Villages Act 2012, it was suggested that an alternative dispute resolution mechanism be provided to residents and operators in order to peacefully find resolution to minor conflicts before they are referred to an ACAT hearing which, as we all know, can be daunting for many. A more informal and personal opportunity where both parties can work through their disputes in a comfortable and relaxed environment, in my opinion, will see many matters resolved more easily for all parties.

We are also seeing other initiatives in restorative justice. For example, at the University of Canberra there are already discussions happening in relation to possibly embedding restorative practices into curriculum. I acknowledge the Dean of Education, Professor Geoff Riordan, for his interest in restorative justice and his efforts that could see incorporating restorative practice into future coursework. I have enjoyed working with Professor Riordan and his team, Associate Professor Wayne Hawkins and Associate Professor Thomas Nielsen, who are already working with schools to measure different impacts on student learning in classrooms, offering student wellbeing, social concern and restorative opportunities in participating schools. It is very gratifying to hear the universities and schools are coming together and reaping the benefits when implementing restorative practices.

I was also pleased to hear that Professor Thomas Nielsen showcases a video of Professor John Braithwaite, a champion in restorative justice, during his lectures to his students studying education, which followed on from an earlier meeting that I had with Professor Thomas Nielsen many years ago. He was so enthusiastic about the discussion that he went away and did some research, and since then he has been using Professor John Braithwaite's video in his lectures.

Let me further expand on this restorative city vision which is coming closer to becoming a reality in the ACT. Restorative cities have already been established globally, such as Wanganui in New Zealand and also Nova Scotia in Canada, where the human rights commission has implemented restorative processes in dealing with dispute resolution, dramatically decreasing the length of time taken to resolve matters as well as increasing the level of satisfaction of affected parties. That is no surprise to me. Restorative cities form a global community where they share information and policies with each other, and the ACT can and one day will be a part of this interconnected global community.

I also thank the ACT Restorative Justice Champions for their hard work and their vision in bringing this process to fruition in the ACT. We have come a long way and I am extremely proud to have been a part of it. I know Canberra can and will be a world-leading restorative city and I know this Labor government is ideally placed to make it happen. As we know, the ACT government has been a leader in many areas, and certainly in this aspect in Australia the ACT government has shown great leadership.

I call on the ACT government to work towards the declaration of Canberra as a restorative city, which confirms its commitment to exploring and implementing

creative solutions, sharing problems, using restorative processes and continuing the ACT's vision for a safer, more connected community. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Capital Metro, Minister for Health, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change) (11.30): I thank Ms Porter for moving this motion today and for her longstanding interest in the issue and provision of restorative justice in our community.

When citizens of Canberra gathered at the restorative communities conference that I hosted here at the Legislative Assembly last July there were messages from people around the world whose cities were also on a restorative journey in order to make them the best places for their children and young people to grow up in. Communities in Hull and Leeds in the UK, Vermont in the US and Wanganui in New Zealand have all worked towards making their cities places where people and organisations are committed to practices that promote, build and enable respectful, inclusive relationships, where individuals are aware of and understand the principles of restorative justice in their personal and organisational practice. Leaders of these cities congratulated Canberra for strengthening its focus on restorative community and acknowledged us as an inspiration to other sites engaged with the international restorative learning community.

The restorative justice philosophy came to Canberra initially with ACT Policing running restorative justice conferences for young offenders using the so-called Wagga model in the 1990s. The re-integrative shaming experiments, or RISE, project began in the ACT in 1995. It examined and compared the effectiveness of restorative justice conferencing across offence types. The positive results from this research led to further restorative justice programs being established and studied globally.

The recent Campbell collaboration review, which was released at the end of 2013, considered the efficacy of face-to-face restorative justice conferences at hundreds of sites across the world. It was the culmination of almost 20 years of restorative justice processes and associated evaluations. The Campbell collaboration review concluded that even better outcomes for restorative justice conferences are achieved for violent crimes committed by adult offenders. It showed that restorative justice conferences play a significant role in reducing the trauma symptoms of victims and the re-offending behaviours of offenders. And, importantly, and possibly most surprising, the results also revealed a reduction in the desire of victims, especially victims of violent crimes, to seek personal vengeance on their offenders.

This is of benefit to our whole community. Restorative justice conferences involve an exchange of openness, understanding and empathy. They frequently restore dignity, security, relationships, social support and peace of mind as well as addressing material loss and reparation.

The ACT has long recognised the importance of quality restorative justice approaches in our justice system. Fifteen years ago, on 31 January 2005, the Crimes (Restorative Justice) Act 2004 commenced operation and the ACT's specialist Restorative Justice

Unit was launched. Eleven years later the success of this voluntary scheme and the unit has been firmly established. Ninety-seven per cent of participants expressed satisfaction with restorative justice processes and outcomes. Restorative justice has shown itself as a proven vehicle for meeting the needs of victims, offenders and their communities of care, achieving a 90 per cent compliance rate for offenders making reparation through shared agreements.

Now that a solid foundation of restorative justice practice has been built in our city, the government has made provision for the expansion of this scheme to phase 2, which will include adult offences and more serious matters for both adults and young people so that more victims of crime can have access to this scheme. In 2018 the scheme will also include domestic violence and sexual assault matters for eligible and suitable participants.

But beyond the justice system there is potential for restorative practices to expand also. Restorative practice can be defined as a whole community philosophy, an active philosophy, which places respectful relationships at the heart of justice, education and community services. It builds and maintains inclusive networks of positive relationships among community members and promotes mutual accountability and shared responsibility.

The many excited community members who attended the restorative communities conference last July have maintained their enthusiasm and have since convened to form Canberra's Restorative Communities Network. They share a vision for the future that recognises that traditional approaches are not the only ones. This group is excited at the prospect of restorative practices being implemented across agencies and institutions, creating opportunities for positive shifts in the way we, as a community, respond to social challenges.

The outcomes we expect to see from a restorative communities approach include increased trust, inclusiveness, better communication, less crime, more victim-initiated and community-led approaches, improvements in relationships, reduced levels of exclusion, raised attainment, fewer family breakdowns and less workplace conflict. Taking a restorative approach can also promote greater social cohesion, greater understanding and respect.

The Restorative Communities Network and interested community members will be meeting regularly to consult about the potential for restorative practices in specific sites in our community. The first workshop will be held later this month and will focus on restorative practice in schools. This is a great place to start as schools are an important site of socialisation for young people. If children feel safe, cared about and supported they will be able to develop integrity, self-esteem, emotional awareness and assertiveness. They will develop relational skills that develop the capacity to be empathetic.

What the world definitely needs is a greater focus on restorative communities, one that sees men and women who are empathetic and strong, autonomous and connected, responsible to self, to family and friends and to society, who are capable of understanding how those responsibilities are, ultimately, inseparable.

Ms Porter has been a great champion of restorative justice and restorative practice for many years, and I thank her for bringing this motion to the Assembly today in what will be one of her last sitting days in this place. It is a great opportunity to reflect on the progress that is being undertaken to develop restorative practice more broadly in our community and the work of the Restorative Communities Network for Canberra to be potentially a restorative city.

As those in other cities who have adopted this mantle know, it is a big and bold ambition with challenges ahead but they have shown, and I think many in Canberra share this belief, that it is the best and most effective way of working together with children, families, schools and communities for a more just future. I am very pleased to lend the government's support to Ms Porter's motion today.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.38): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion before us today and discussing the issue of restorative justice, as well as more broadly the ACT's desire for a safer community.

Restorative justice has a long history in Australia across all jurisdictions. The ACT experience commenced back in 1994 and arose from a New South Wales Police model that originated in Wagga Wagga. Those of us in this place who have engaged in debates in the Assembly and in an extensive discussion in the JACS committee will have a good understanding of the application of restorative justice and how it has enhanced the youth justice system in the ACT.

Diverting people away from crime should always be a desire for all of us, and particularly when it comes to our youth. The system has been well articulated previously in this place, and I thank both the minister and Ms Porter for their comments today.

I note that this is the subject of a debate tomorrow. I do not want to be in breach of standing order 59 and anticipate that discussion. Obviously there are steps being taken to move the ACT from having restorative justice in the youth domain towards having it involve adults, which has always been proposed as the next step. There are complex issues with restorative justice as we move forward, and they will be addressed in detail tomorrow when the opposition debates the bill.

I want to make sure that we understand that restorative justice is one piece of the puzzle and that a focus on restorative justice does not suggest that community safety is being addressed well by this government, because across the board we see gaps and failure in community safety in Canberra. Just last week the latest rates of crime statistics were released. In a range of those statistics across the board in Canberra there has been a deterioration in results. There has been an increase in crime across Canberra, in black and white.

We know that this government in 2013 cut funding to police by \$15 million. In the middle of population growth, and in a situation where we see crime trends worsening, with police on the streets confronted by violence in Civic, by the ice epidemic and by issues like domestic violence, this government thought it would be a good idea to cut

funding to police. We know that a direct consequence of that was that staff were lost. This government cut jobs. This government cut jobs in community safety, and now this government is lecturing the Assembly on community safety, having cut jobs in policing.

We know that about 13 or 14 jobs were cut last year. We are expecting the same this year. They are jobs that support police in their very important front-line functions. Indeed police felt so unsafe because of a lack of numbers in Civic that they put in a safety report saying that they felt fearful, saying that there was a dangerous environment for police in Civic because of a lack of numbers, and that has occurred under this government. We know that there have been recent cuts to the property crime section of police, amidst an increase in property crime statistics. So we are being lectured by the government on issues like community safety and property crime when it is actually cutting funding.

We have proposed a number of issues to support community safety and our police but the government has failed to support them. In the midst of the very difficult job that police do, we have said that front-line officers should be given tasers. At the moment they only go to sergeants. And we know that in many instances only acting sergeants are on duty.

Mr Corbell: A point of order.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Stop the clock. A point of order, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition wants to do a “compare and contrast” exercise on law and order, but this motion is actually about the delivery of restorative justice in our community. It is not about anything else.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr Corbell: My point of order is on relevance, Madam Assistant Speaker. Whilst I think it is fair enough for Mr Hanson to make the occasional debating point—I have no problem with that—he does need to remain relevant to the subject matter of the motion.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, you have raised your point of order. Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Madam Assistant Speaker—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: As to the point of order—

MR HANSON: On the point of order, if I may, Madam Assistant Speaker, the motion itself refers to “the ACT’s vision for safer, more connected communities”. This debate is about the safety of communities, of which restorative justice is a part. But if we are talking about the ACT’s vision for the safety of communities, I think that is a reasonably broad debate, and talking about police in a debate about safer communities is relevant.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I would ask you to remain relevant to the motion. I note that paragraph (2) of the motion talks about the ACT's vision for a safer, more connected community. Reference to the police may be applicable in that regard, but please ensure that you are addressing the motion.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. The government do not like those issues being debated, do they? But let us talk about restorative justice for the thugs that attack police. We have said that, for those thugs that attack police, those attacks or assaults should carry additional penalties. The government do not think they should.

Mr Corbell: A point of order.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Hanson. Mr Corbell, do you have a point of order?

Mr Corbell: Madam Assistant Speaker, it is again on relevance. This is a very long motion. It has quite a number of parts, all of which refer to the value of restorative justice as an alternative justice response. Right at the very end it says:

... calls on the ACT Government to work towards the declaration of Canberra as a restorative city, which will confirm its commitment to exploring and implementing creative solutions to shared problems using restorative processes and continue the ACT's vision for safer, more connected communities.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you; I can read, Mr Corbell. What is your point of order?

Mr Corbell: My point of order is that Mr Hanson is ignoring your ruling to remain relevant. He is continuing to have a broader discussion about law and order, about tougher sentences et cetera. That is not what this motion is about. This motion is not about traditional justice responses, and I would ask you—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Corbell. You have made your point of order.

Mr Corbell: to ask him, Madam Assistant Speaker, to remain relevant and have respect—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: You do not need to direct my work. Thank you; sit down, please, Mr Corbell.

Mr Corbell: for the subject before the chair.

MR HANSON: On the point of order, it is normal practice in this place, when we have a debate on an issue, that the debate can be broadened, as long as there is a linkage. We are talking about the legal framework, the justice framework in the ACT. I am saying that restorative justice will only work as part of that framework if the

entire framework is working. I am trying to express in my debating points that that framework is not working as it should, and the impact of that on restorative justice is a debating point.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I refer you to my earlier point, about remaining relevant. Mr Corbell, I also refer you to my earlier ruling that the motion talks about the vision for a safer, more connected community—

Mr Corbell: In the context of restorative justice, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: It says “using restorative processes and continue”. Mr Hanson, please consider your references.

MR HANSON: Madam Assistant Speaker, I will consider them. They are very sensitive, aren't they? I think restorative justice is important. Maybe restorative justice could be applied to people who attack police. Equally, we need to make sure that we have adequate sentences for people who carry out those types of attacks. The government are refusing to act, so if they will not, we will.

One issue that restorative justice, at this stage, will not step towards is the issue of domestic violence. We have called for a specialist domestic violence court, which I believe is missing from our legal system. Restorative justice will not address domestic violence cases, and that is why we have called for a domestic violence court to be established. The government has failed to act on that.

Restorative justice will only work if you have a properly resourced court system. We know that this government have been dragged kicking and screaming to appoint a fifth Supreme Court judge. We called for that three years ago. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people have had their justice delayed as the court system has not been responsive enough regarding criminal and civil matters in our courts. It is the Supreme Court where they have been dragged kicking and screaming, and now we see a logjam in the Magistrates Court, with those cases delayed. It is difficult to have restorative justice if you cannot get your case heard in a timely fashion.

Equally, restorative justice requires a well-operating DPP. The DPP has said in committees in this place that he is so under-resourced that some days he struggles to get prosecutors to court. He cannot find the people. He struggles to find the people to get to court on a given day to do the important work that he has to do. Surely, the DPP has a role when it comes to restorative justice.

What about those people who find themselves going to jail, having regard to the restorative justice system here in the ACT? What do we say about the restorative justice nature of a jail that is overflowing? How do you have restorative justice when there are drugs proliferating in the jail? How do you have restorative justice when there are assaults in the jail? How is there restorative justice for a remandee who is raped by a sentenced prisoner, Madam Assistant Speaker? You do not. These are the issues that are plaguing our justice system and that are plaguing our jail.

We have looked for restorative justice in our system and for an expansion of that, but how do you have restorative justice when you are trying to implement sensible, effective measures to test people for driving motor vehicles when they have taken drugs? The Labor Party are the party that described random roadside drug testing as “redneck”. They did not support random roadside drug testing. So you can have restorative justice, but if you do not have natural justice, if you are not prepared to support people who are going to be injured or killed through the reckless action of operating a vehicle whilst under the influence of drugs, it is difficult to see that this government have any credibility when it comes to issues like restorative justice.

People entering the restorative justice process must have confidence in the legal system. They must have trust in those who are managing it. How can anyone in that circumstance have great trust in this government when the police minister has had to stand down because their office is being investigated? How do people have confidence that this government is committed to restorative justice when Labor Party senior staff are being investigated by police—the staff of the police minister are being investigated by police? Where is the restorative justice in that?

Where is the restorative justice when we see the organisation that funds the government, both the Greens and the Labor Party, being investigated by the police? I am referring to the CFMEU, which is being investigated, and it funds the Labor Party and the Greens. Where is the community safety and the justice in that?

Ms Porter: A point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker.

MR HANSON: Stop the clocks, please.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: A point of order, Ms Porter.

Ms Porter: Madam Assistant Speaker, I also raise a point of order on relevance. The discussion that Mr Hanson is going to now is certainly way out of the ballpark as far as this motion is concerned.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. Mr Hanson, please remain relevant to the motion.

MR HANSON: Certainly, Madam Assistant Speaker. There are many more points I could make. I have probably made my point. It is all well and good to come into this place and talk about a restorative city as an intention and a design. We on this side of the chamber support restorative justice. It has been applied for a long time in the ACT. It has been supported by both sides of the chamber. Without anticipating a debate, we support, in broad, the steps towards this being rolled out into the adult system.

But let me make it very clear that it is only one part of our justice system. As it says in the motion, it is part of the ACT’s vision for safer, connected communities. But if that is where the effort is applied, without having the courts working, without having the police properly resourced, without having the DPP resourced and without having a legal framework that is adequate to provide protections for people, restorative justice will not work.

You need to have a balance. The scales of justice, Madam Assistant Speaker, must be in balance, and they must be balanced between the rights of the individual and the desire to make sure that we have rehabilitation, and making sure that those charged with the grave responsibility for implementing our justice system, be they the courts or the police, have the appropriate powers, equipment and protections so that they can do their job.

Yes, we are supportive of restorative justice. But to have that debate in isolation from the broader justice system, while there are so many failures, from the ministry all the way down, is naive and it does not show the whole picture. Essentially, it will not achieve the vision that we would all have, which we would all share in this place, which is for a safer community.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Education, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs and Minister for Road Safety) (11.57): I thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion forward today and for the opportunity to discuss this matter in the Assembly. As she and other members have noted, the history of innovative approaches to criminal justice in the ACT is a long and proud one.

Successive ACT governments over time, and the Greens, Liberal and Labor parties alike, have shown, up until now, a unique resistance to punitive law and order ideology for the most part, which has allowed our community to explore new approaches and build on existing research bases. I have been concerned to see signs of this evidence-based response to complex issues being somewhat eroded and threatened by the current Canberra Liberals, but reassured by the broader community response to simplistic announcements.

The motion before us refers in the first point to this long history and to the re-integrative shaming experiments project which provided its final evaluation report in 2011. While acknowledging that the use of the word “shaming” was quite controversial at the time, and is not language we would use now, the intent of the experiments was far deeper and more considered than simply shaming offenders. The final report showed that both offenders and victims found conferences to be fairer than the court, and that there were clear benefits to victims that were greater in conferences than in court.

But as well as these findings, and essential to the continued expansion of similar programs into the future, were the findings related to recidivism. A distinguished professor and distinguished Canberran, John Braithwaite, was involved in the experiments and evaluations, and I acknowledge his ongoing contribution to these practices both here in Canberra and now also around the world. On recidivism, he said:

The substantive conclusion of RISE is that restorative justice can work, and can even reduce crime by violent offenders. But there is no guarantee that it will work for all offence types. Caution and more research are needed before rapid expansion of any new approach to treating crime. Less caution is needed, however, in testing restorative justice on more serious types of violent offences. The findings in this report provide firm ground for repeating the violence experiment in many other venues and with more refined types of violent offences, including robbery, assault, and grievous bodily harm.

As we know, the caution was heard, as was the positive encouragement to continue. I note that perhaps the ACT could have moved a little faster on rolling out conference approaches to new offences and offender groups in recent years, but I respect Minister Corbell's longstanding commitment to further implementation of restorative justice approaches.

The ACT continues to consider evidence-based justice programs, which sits well with me as the ACT Greens minister for justice with responsibility for corrections. This is a fertile city in which to explore these complex issues, with a one-government philosophy, our strong university sector and national institutions, and our collaborative community sector. When I sought feedback regarding the rapidly increasing prison populations while holding roundtables in 2013, and then again in 2014, I was overwhelmed by the attendance of every possible stakeholder who had a sincere interest in reducing offending and reoffending and improving community safety. I am not sure that I would have had such buy-in in other jurisdictions.

Restorative justice practices have broader implications than just the criminal justice system, however. I will let others more qualified seek to define this approach in other areas, but I will say that I see restorative processes as bringing people together to repair harm when relationships are damaged by the specific actions of one or more people. They also increase an individual's accountability for repairing harm to others.

As I say, restorative justice has a broad appeal to other sections of justice, government and community relations. In my own portfolios, I hear not just of conference impacts on offenders who may be clients of ACT Corrective Services but also impacts in education. Restorative practices in schools are efforts that build, maintain and restore communities around inclusive networks of positive relationships.

The ACT government, in its response to the *Schools for all* report of the expert panel on students with complex needs and challenging behaviours, accepted recommendation 9.1 from the expert panel's report, which recommends that school-wide positive behaviour support is implemented in schools. Positive behaviour support will be implemented in all ACT public schools from 2016. The education directorate is currently exploring how restorative practices can be integrated into this approach.

ACT schools are working towards adopting restorative practices in line with the national safe schools framework. The nine elements of the national safe schools framework that we can use restorative justice type thinking to implement include restorative practices that allow school leaders to demonstrate their leadership commitment to a safe school through providing their staff with a proven and practical way to build, maintain and restore communities around inclusive networks of positive relationships.

Restorative practices can be used to assist in the creation of a supportive and connected school culture. They do this through providing an opportunity for staff to model and promote explicit pro-social values and expectations for behaviour. This is achieved through processes including circle time and conferences.

Restorative practices can work to reconnect or restore relationships. Restorative practices provide an evidence-based positive behaviour management approach which is structured so that it may be consistently applied by staff to repair harm when relationships are damaged by the specific actions of one or more people.

Restorative practices can be incorporated into a school's engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum to ensure that students are taught explicitly how to repair harm when relationships are damaged.

And restorative practices provide an opportunity for schools to build positive partnerships with families and community through working collaboratively with parents and carers when repair to harm is required. Restorative practices also allow schools to demonstrate to the community that they have a proven and consistent approach regarding student safety and wellbeing.

There is much more to be said and done before the ACT can truly have a declaration of Canberra as a restorative city, but we are working towards it. The examples I have been able to provide around the education space indicate the potential broader application here, and the opportunities for making long-term and lasting impacts on people who have been involved in harm where restoration can take away some of the particularly negative elements of what has happened.

Certainly for me and the ACT Greens we have a strong personal and professional interest in supporting the development of Canberra as a restorative city, and we look forward to the ongoing work of the Restorative Communities Network in achieving this. I am advised that the first workshop of 2016 regarding restorative practices in schools will be held on Thursday, 18 February across the plaza, at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre. Members may recognise that date; it is a sitting day, so unfortunately I will not be able to attend myself. I hope that future workshops do not occur on sitting days, but I encourage policymakers, academics and members of the community to keep an eye out for these great opportunities, to better understand and engage with the many benefits that restorative practices can bring.

In conclusion, I would like to again thank Ms Porter for bringing this motion forward and giving an opportunity to reflect on what has succeeded so far in the restorative justice space, what still needs to be done, and where some of the opportunities lie. There is certainly scope, and I support her call, for the ACT government to work towards the declaration of Canberra as a restorative city. It presents many opportunities to benefit members of our community, an opportunity to make our city safer, and an opportunity where people feel that justice has been served.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (12.06), in reply: I thank members for their contribution to the debate on this important matter. You can see from what Mr Corbell has said that restorative justice is not just a nice idea but a serious, well-founded, well-researched and well-proven approach to many aspects of our lives.

I am pleased to hear that restorative communities' first focus is in schools. I have been advocating for this for a long time.

Mr Corbell said that Canberra's becoming a restorative city will be a big and bold aim. I believe Canberra and Canberrans are up to big and bold.

Mr Hanson notes the matters to be dealt with in this place tomorrow. Yes, Madam Speaker, providing RJ opportunities for more serious crimes is complex. However, it can be successfully introduced. I have heard from many people in New South Wales who have introduced this concept, and it has worked for more serious crimes. Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury talked about the substantial research in this area and the benefits that can flow from utilising restorative justice when dealing with violent crimes, even domestic violence. Mr Hanson is wrong in his assertion that restorative justice cannot be, and will not ever be, employed in cases of domestic violence or sexual assault. I know it will test the imagination of those in this place that this can happen. Yes, it can be, and does in other places. Of course, this needs to be carefully managed and sensitively undertaken. However, the benefits can be huge.

Ramping up sentencing and locking people away for more and more time just does not work. As Commander Steve Love affirmed, "And if we really examine our heart of hearts, we know." I suggest that Mr Hanson inform himself a great deal more about how prisoners can undertake restorative justice conferences even from jail. Perhaps he should acquaint himself a bit more about the story of the young man who shot the pizza delivery man, how the father of that person who was shot undertook a restorative justice conference with one of the young offenders, and the good news story that followed.

Some other good news stories are the success of the blueprint for youth justice. Under the blueprint, more than 500 young people were referred. It is programs like restorative justice that helped achieve great success. It helped achieve a reduction of 28 per cent in the number of young people under youth justice supervision and 35 per cent in the number of young people in detention since the commencement of the blueprint. That speaks for itself.

I thank Mr Rattenbury for his comments about restorative justice and its application to schools, and his commitment to that. I look forward to watching the development of Canberra as a restorative city. I already have some of my retirement plans mapped out: to continue to work with the introduction of restorative justice in this place and in other places. I thank members for their contribution.

Motion agreed to.

Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption

MR WALL (Brindabella) (12.10): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption found evidence of bullying, intimidation and exclusion on worksites across Australia;
 - (b) in relation to the activities of the ACT Branch of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption recommended that the Secretary of the ACT Branch of the CFMEU should be referred to the Director-General of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in order that consideration may be given to whether he should be charged with and prosecuted for intimidating an inspector contrary to section 190 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*;
 - (c) that the CFMEU provides substantial financial assistance and has significant influence on ACT Labor and the ACT Greens; and
 - (d) the ongoing police investigations into alleged leaks, relating to a ministerial meeting with the Chief Police Officer, from the former Police Minister's office to the ACT Branch of the CFMEU; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government's Labor and Green members to suspend all financial and political links with the CFMEU.

My intention with this motion today is to remind us all of the tentacles of the union movement that reach well and truly into this Assembly and into the corridors of power that this government occupy. This is not the first time that I have brought a motion of this nature to this place. I first raised the issue whilst the royal commission was underway, but now that it has concluded, it is time for some action.

It is also time again to highlight the evidence of bullying, intimidation and exclusion that has been uncovered during the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. The evidence uncovered alarming practices taking place on Canberra building sites, practices that have sadly been evident to too many businesses well before the royal commission began.

On 31 December 2015, the royal commission handed down its report and we as a nation saw the extent of the misconduct, the unlawfulness, the alleged corrupt behaviour that now extends throughout the union movement across this country. The commission received evidence from 525 witnesses in public and private hearings on 189 individual hearing days that were held in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and, of course, here in Canberra.

In conducting its investigations, the commission issued more than 2,000 notices to produce documents and generated a database of over 852,000 individual documents comprising millions of pages of evidence. The evidence that resulted was damning and in the light of day shows the true impact on the construction industry, its businesses and its workers.

The myth that unions always act with the employees' best interests at heart has well and truly been put to the test by the evidence that has come to light during the royal commission. The bullying and standover tactics that have been proven to have been adopted by some unions, in particular the CFMEU, are not inflicted solely on businesses. It seems that these tactics are used on employees as well. The same tactics are perpetrated on those the union claims to protect and represent, namely, workers.

On too many occasions and too many job sites, it has come to light that employees who do not toe the line and join the union are victimised. The royal commission uncovered evidence of widespread threats to employees who refuse union membership. In one instance that was highlighted, a union official warned an employer to move an employee off a particular job simply because he did not want to become a union member.

This behaviour is a kick in the guts for the honest workers and the honest business owners in the building and construction industry. There are many hardworking, honest, law-abiding business owners and workers alike. Some are card-carrying union members, whilst some are not. Most of them in their entirety just want to get on and do the job they have been hired to do. They want to get on with the job in an environment that is free from fear and free from intimidation.

As we know, the ACT featured heavily in the hearings of the royal commission. The fact that criminal activity, most notably the alleged extortion and blackmail of tens of thousands of dollars by a union official, and dare I mention a former officer holder within the ACT ALP, was found is incredibly disturbing. Over the three weeks of the royal commission hearings relating to Canberra activity, individuals from our local construction industry bravely and publicly shone a light on the cultural intimidation, bribery, corruption and thuggery, not to mention the cartel behaviour, being perpetrated by the ACT branch of the CFMEU across construction sites here in the ACT.

This behaviour has been ongoing for a long time and, on a daily basis, right under our noses. A recent survey conducted by the Master Builders Association here in the ACT found that 60 per cent of respondents had had their livelihoods threatened if they did not sign the CFMEU's pattern EBA. Half of those surveyed had been told by CFMEU officials that they could not perform work unless their employees were union members, 70 per cent of people had been verbally intimidated by a union official, and a very disturbing 40 per cent had been physically intimidated.

According to the ACT government's own *Getting home safely* report, safety on construction sites stems from a workplace culture of consultation and collaboration between all parties, yet for years this has not been the case. When workplace safety is allowed to be used as a tool to litigate industrial relations disputes, it is the safety in workplaces that is the first victim.

As a result of the royal commission, we now know that the CFMEU has raised in excess of \$1.2 million in 2014 alone from undisclosed payments in enterprise bargaining agreements here in the ACT. That is \$1.2 million in one year, just here in the ACT, of undisclosed funds. This does not include membership or so-called

donations to the movement. The flow-on effect from such a cash grab is felt across the city. It has inflated the costs of construction. It has threatened jobs and impacted on fairness and competition here in the construction industry within the ACT.

The union cut, plus the impact on productivity, is estimated to add around 20 to 30 per cent to the cost of building here in the ACT. That is an impact on every Canberran. The impact is not just on big building projects or developments, but on the smaller ones too. That is a direct cost to housing affordability and to every construction project that occurs in this city; 20 to 30 per cent is unnecessarily being paid by the ratepayer or by the first homebuyer.

One of the most pertinent recommendations made by the royal commission, of course, appears as referral No 12 in relation to the activities of the ACT branch of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, or the CFMEU. The Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption recommended that the secretary of the ACT branch of the CFMEU be referred to the Director-General, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in order that consideration may be given to whether he should be charged with and prosecuted for intimidating an inspector contrary to section 190 of the ACT Work Health and Safety Act 2011. This referral speaks for itself. Yet what we have heard from the leader of the ALP and the Chief Minister himself in response to this is silence. There has been absolutely nothing said by the leader of the Labor Party in the ACT, and the leader of the ACT government; complete and utter silence.

In respect of governance and leadership, perhaps we should turn to the policy platform of the Australian Labor Party. The union governance platform of the Australian Labor Party states:

... Labor has zero tolerance for criminality or corruption in the union movement and has consistently argued that any criminal conduct in the union movement must be investigated by police and prosecuted in the Court.

I repeat, “investigated by police and prosecuted in the court.” It continues:

Recent revelations of theft and the flagrant misuse of union members’ money by a small number of union officials requires a tough and effective response. We must ensure such conduct is detected and acted upon at the earliest opportunity.

That is a continuing statement from the ALP union governance platform. In stark contrast, there has been no such statement from the ACT branch of the Labor Party, no such distance from thuggery or intimidation that has emerged as evidence as a result of the royal commission. In fact, what we do see, instead of a constant flow of reminders, is that the ACT Labor-Greens government have strong ties with the ACT branch of the CFMEU and, in return, the potential for undue influence over the government is ever present.

We need to look no further than the ongoing police investigation into the conduct of the former ACT police minister’s office in relation to a conversation that had allegedly taken place between union officials and the minister’s own chief of staff around disclosing details about ministerial meetings that the minister had had with the territory’s Chief Police Officer.

Late last year, there was yet another example of unions having significant influence over the ALP. In pre-selection, the ACT's longest serving minister was relegated to fifth on the ticket because the left faction of the Labor Party was controlled wholly and solely by the unions. This turn of events was enough to see the second-most senior Labor member of the Assembly, the deputy leader of the government, the Deputy Chief Minister, pull the pin, because he knew he would not be pre-selected.

Since Mr Barr has been in charge, one by one ministers around him have seen their political careers ended. It can be argued that this is all as a result of union influence. Despite the utter incompetence of Ms Burch as a minister, the final nail in her political coffin was her office's involvement in backgrounding union officials about police business.

It is also a well-known fact that the CFMEU have provided, and will continue to provide, substantial financial largesse to try to throw up the electoral prospects of Labor and Green members in this place. The royal commission evidence and subsequent criminal activity that has been uncovered should surely be enough for the ACT Labor and Greens government to distance itself from the unions.

A hint of the devastating effect corrupt union influence could have on a government is slowly seeping out. This influence has already effectively claimed the scalp of two ministers. The question remains: what more will we see before the year is out? Left faction or right faction, it does not really matter in the ACT Labor Party if the union movement is all-prevailing.

I have spoken before in this place about the courage shown by local businesses that have put much on the line to give evidence at the royal commission. These businesses should be applauded for doing so. They risked their livelihoods and their reputations in doing so. These risks are real because a culture of fear has been cultivated and allowed to take hold in the ACT construction sector, a culture of fear perpetrated by standover men, a culture being perpetrated by price fixing and by threats being made to businesses that they will not work in the ACT unless they toe the union line.

I believe the motion before us today reflects wider community expectations when it calls on the government to cease its involvement with the CFMEU, to stop taking its money and to stop letting the union movement decide how the territory's elected officials should run government. Such a standard would reflect on the government's commitment to be honest to the worker, to be honest to businesses and to overall fairness, honesty and integrity. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (12.22): I thank Mr Wall for bringing this motion today. Andrew Wall and his opposition will look for any opportunity to further their right wing agenda. They will use any opportunity to attack the union movement and its workers, whether it is to support the reduction of penalty rates or oppose the introduction of a portable long service leave provision, amongst many others. This motion is no different—just another mud-slinging exercise. The government will not be supporting it.

I will be reminding all workers in Tuggeranong of Mr Wall's moves on their rights of work and their penalty rates as we go forward into the election. Of course, thank you to the Canberra Liberals for their campaign against workers in the ACT. The union movement, and particularly the CFMEU, is growing every day: more memberships thanks to the campaign from the Canberra Liberals.

The trade union royal commission has been a political tool from the start. The community knows this; we know this; the Canberra Liberals definitely know this as well. Set up by the Abbott Liberal government, the commission has been a \$45 million cost to the taxpayers, deliberately aimed to reduce the strength of the union movement and to drain the resources of unions. John Buchanan from the University of Sydney business school put it this way:

It was a poorly conceived commission, a highly partisan intervention designed to weaken the union movement.

The Liberals opposite will say that we support corruption and criminal activity. Nothing could be further from the truth. As I have repeatedly said in this place, corrupt or criminal activity should be dealt with, as with any other activity in such an area, and any evidence that presents itself should be pursued by the police through the legal system. But the commission was never designed this way, and you do not have to look very far into the details of the commission to get an understanding of how it was questionable in almost every way.

Dyson Heydon, who was appointed commissioner at the beginning of this political exercise, managed to have former and current federal Labor politicians dragged in front of him for questioning with no unlawful activity ever uncovered. Mr Heydon even accepted an invitation to speak at a Liberal Party fundraiser during his time as commissioner, then refused to step down and basically rendered the impartiality of the commission completely impossible. This regrettable episode only served to highlight—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mr Gentleman, could you take a seat, please. Could I remind members of the convention and the standing orders in relation to comments about judicial officers. The standing orders are clear that comments about judicial officers should be in substantive motion. I know this a matter of some political discussion, but I have ruled on this in the past. I would like you, Mr Gentleman, to be mindful of the standing orders when being critical of a royal commissioner.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will leave those comments there in the public arena as they are. The introduction and overview document produced by the commission itself states at point 119:

It is well established that a Royal Commission is not bound by the rules of evidence, apart from rules which are more than mere rules of evidence, like legal professional privilege.

Furthermore, at point 122 this document states:

In short, while the rules of evidence were always a useful and practical guide for many questions arising in the Commission, ultimately the Commission was required to, and did, proceed in a way which met the other demands upon it, including the necessity of delivering its Report on time in accordance with the Letters Patent, provided that the requirements of due process were also met.

So you see, Madam Speaker, it was clearly a political set-up; they do not have to provide the same scrutiny as a court. The evidence produced by this politically motivated commission is so questionable that the interim report even noted that the concept of onus of proof does not apply in a royal commission. These are their words in their report. From this, it follows that, strictly speaking, neither the civil standard nor the criminal standard of proof applies either.

The final report of the commission was released yesterday and what a predictable document it is. The recommendations focus on reducing the abilities of unions to organise and protect workers and also fit within the aims and intentions of the proposed ABCC legislation currently before the federal parliament. Some of Commissioner Heydon's recommendations would reduce right of entry powers, reduce organising abilities and allow parliamentary intervention into the union movement, amongst other things. You would be forgiven if you were to mistake some of the recommendations for Liberal Party attitudes towards unions. It is not surprising Commissioner Heydon was the choice to speak at that fundraiser.

This entire commission was a political exercise and simply a waste of taxpayers' money. Within any organisation there are individuals able to commit crimes. There were charges laid against a couple of members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union in relation to evidence which was given at the commission. To date no-one—no-one—from the ACT branch of the CFMEU has been found guilty of any crimes, and Johnny Lomax has had his case dismissed entirely. One employee, who admitted to offences while under questioning by the commission, was promptly sacked and expelled from the union. These are people from a union of 120,000-strong members, and I have mentioned a couple. How many members of the New South Wales Liberal Party were implicated in corrupt dealings by ICAC evidence in the past few years? Ten. So would the Canberra Liberals proceed to claim that the entire New South Wales Liberal Party was to be dealt with? I highly doubt it.

Unions and union officials play a critical work safety role in the territory, particularly in the high risk construction industry. I have spoken on a number of occasions in the Assembly about the enormous progress that has been made in construction safety since this government agreed to all of the recommendations put forward by the getting home safely inquiry. We have worked together to prevent injury and to reduce the social and economic impact of work injury. Employers, workers and the community have enjoyed very significant benefits as a result of that inquiry.

The getting home safely inquiry was commissioned to address clear and immediate problems. Stakeholders conducted themselves in a cooperative and constructive way throughout the inquiry. Furthermore, it has produced a positive return on the investment of conducting the inquiry and implementing its recommendations. In the financial year 2012-13, 736 workers had compensation claims from the construction

industry. Since the implementation of the recommendations there has been a marked reduction: there were only 527 claims in the following year, a 27 per cent reduction.

In several of these aspects it differs very markedly from the trade union royal commission, which I understand has cost the taxpayer in excess of \$45 million to date and threatens to undermine the relationship between unions and employers in the territory. It is a real shame because, in my experience, that relationship has, on the whole, been positive and to the benefit of workers welfare. The government is committed to ensuring that the gains we have made together through the getting home safely process are not eroded.

The ACT Work Health and Safety Act and the Commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009 empower unions to act on behalf of workers to safeguard workplace health and safety. An entry permit issued under the Work Health and Safety Act allows investigation and monitoring of work safety matters by union officers. There are currently 31 entry permits issued in the ACT. This right of entry balances the right of unions to ensure the safety of their members in the workplace and the right of employers to go about their business without undue inconvenience.

I am aware that allegations were made before the royal commission of union bullying on work sites. I encourage any individual, whether an employer or employee, who feels bullied or harassed to report this to WorkSafe ACT. Where there is a dispute about an entry permit holder exercising a right of entry under the act any party may ask WorkSafe ACT inspectors to attend and assist in resolving that dispute. Where this has occurred WorkSafe has resolved the matter.

Complaints made to WorkSafe about the improper conduct of entry permit holders or any risk to workplace health and safety are taken very seriously and investigated. WorkSafe is well resourced and its officers are experienced in these matters. Where there is evidence of wrongdoing, WorkSafe, the courts and the police can deal with it. In all of this, the primary focus must be on the safety of workers.

Madam Speaker, deaths like that of Wayne Vickery in 2011 are a tragedy. Trade unions work towards reducing these deaths and getting a fair go for their workers. Reducing the ability for unions to stop work and prevent deaths and injuries will lead to more deaths and injuries. This is not the outcome I want to see for the ACT or Australia, but this is what will occur if the federal government uses this shabby commission's findings to legislate against unions.

This motion is simply aimed at slinging mud at this government and the union movement in general. It ignores the obvious flaws of the commission set up by Tony Abbott as a deliberate political exercise. I condemn the motion.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.33 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Ministerial office—investigation

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. In today's *Canberra Times*, the Deputy Chief Minister is reported as saying, with regard to police investigations into Ms Burch's office:

... this is a serious matter, It is quite unprecedented for there to be a police investigation into these circumstances, the day-to-day functions of a minister's office ...

Chief Minister, with regard to the police investigation, can you update the Assembly as to the status of the investigation and advise when it is likely to be concluded and, on its conclusion, what you will be providing to the Assembly?

MR BARR: No, I am not in a position to provide any updates. It is a matter for the Chief Police Officer; it is a police investigation. I, like everyone else, await the outcomes.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: With regard to the police investigation, Chief Minister, are you aware if this is limited to ACT Policing or whether there are other branches of the AFP involved?

MR BARR: No, I am not in a position to comment on that. I have had a discussion with the Chief Police Officer; that has been the extent of my involvement.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, does the investigation extend to any personnel still employed at the Assembly?

MR BARR: I am not in a position to comment on that. I am not conducting the investigation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, are day-to-day functions for any other ministerial offices being investigated?

MR BARR: No, not that I am aware of.

Ministerial office—investigation

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Chief Minister. On 15 December 2015 Ms Burch resigned as police minister and since then has left all ministerial roles. The

Canberra Times reports that you and the Deputy Chief Minister have been briefed by police and that the Burch matter goes, and I quote, “beyond an indiscrete conversation with a powerful trade union leader”. Mr Corbell is quoted as saying that it is “unprecedented”. The Burch matter is now the subject of a police inquiry. If it is such a serious matter that it has warranted the resignations of Minister Burch and her chief of staff, when will you, Chief Minister, brief the Assembly on the unprecedented matters that you and the Deputy Chief Minister are aware of concerning the conduct of the previous office of Ms Burch? If not, why not?

MR BARR: The Chief Police Officer has indicated that he will respond publicly at the conclusion of the police evaluation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: So, Chief Minister, do the “unprecedented matters” referred to by Mr Corbell refer to matters that are outside the jurisdiction of the ACT?

MR BARR: I am not in a position to comment on it; I am not conducting the evaluation.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, what actions have you personally taken with regard to the staff of the executive as a consequence of being advised by the police of the ongoing investigation?

MR BARR: My actions are on the public record.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Other than from ACT Policing, have you received any briefings from other government agencies concerned with these matters? If so, when was that briefing?

MR BARR: No.

Director of Public Prosecutions—resourcing

MR WALL: My question is to the Attorney General. In the DPP’s 2014-15 annual report it is reported that there has been a dramatic increase in prosecution work in the superior courts and there has been a particularly noticeable increase in sexual assault-related offences. Trials increased 86.9 per cent between 2001 and 2014. The DPP has reported that the major challenges facing his office are increased workloads and tightening resources. Attorney, what are you doing to deal with these increased workloads and tightening resources faced by the DPP?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Wall for the question. Our DPP does an excellent job. I have full confidence in him and his office. Obviously in various parts of the justice system there are workload pressures. Most recently, as the DPP has observed,

particularly due to an increased level of awareness and reporting on family violence matters, there has been an increase in the number of matters being charged by police and, therefore, matters that need to be dealt with by the DPP.

I meet with the DPP regularly to discuss matters concerning his office where it is relevant for me to do so. The DPP obviously makes submissions to the government through the budget cabinet process for resources where he believes those are necessary. Those are all considered through the budget cabinet process.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Attorney, what impact are the increasing workload and the restraint on resources having on individuals' right to a speedy trial?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, I did not hear the end of that question.

Mr Corbell: Sorry, could you repeat the last part of the question.

MR WALL: In short, what impact are these constraints having on an individual's right to a speedy trial?

MR CORBELL: I am very pleased to say that when it comes to trials, we have virtually no trials or matters requiring criminal trial considered to be longstanding matters. That is the result of the very significant reform work undertaken by Her Honour the Chief Justice along with the work of my directorate and the support that this place has provided to the Supreme Court where necessary when it comes to legislative reform.

We have a very significant improvement in timeliness in the Supreme Court, particularly when it comes to criminal matters. I would draw to Mr Wall's attention the most recent report on government services, which confirms that the number of matters that have gone for longer than a year is now dramatically down in the Supreme Court compared to just a few years ago. When it comes to access to criminal trials, it is very much the case now that we do not see extended waits for those matters to go to trial. That is largely because of the reform work that I referred to earlier.

I have to commend the work of our Chief Justice, who has worked very diligently with her brother and sister judges to reform listing practice in the Supreme Court to ensure that matters are brought on in a timely way.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Attorney, does the expansion to the fifth judge cause extra resourcing issues for the DPP?

MR CORBELL: There is the potential for that to occur, and that is why the government will give consideration to resourcing questions for the DPP in the context of the forthcoming budget. It is worth observing that the fifth resident judge for the territory will be appointed at the beginning of the next financial year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, are you aware of other resourcing constraints within either the Supreme Court or the Magistrates Court?

MR CORBELL: As is the case in any area of public administration, there are pressures when it comes to resourcing and capacity from time to time. These matters are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Hospitals—University of Canberra

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the progress of the University of Canberra public hospital and on how the project will be delivered?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for the question. I was pleased to join with the Chief Minister, my colleague the assistant minister, Minister Fitzharris, and Minister Bourke, along with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, earlier this week, on Monday, to mark the commencement of construction work for the new University of Canberra public hospital. It is another infrastructure commitment made by this government at the last election which is now being delivered by us.

The delivery of the University of Canberra public hospital is an important enhancement of overall service delivery capacity for our public health system. It will see the delivery of a purpose-built subacute hospital facility to provide, in a purpose-built environment, the rehabilitation, short-stay mental health care and a range of other rehabilitative services necessary for people once they move from an acute care setting.

The government was very pleased to announce the head contractor for the University of Canberra public hospital, Brookfield Multiplex, in November last year, and also to reveal the capital construction cost of \$139 million for the new University of Canberra public hospital. Brookfield Multiplex, along with its partner company, Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions, will provide both the construction capability and the ongoing facility management, once the hospital is operational, for a term of approximately 25 years.

Brookfield Multiplex have recently completed a number of other major hospital projects nationally, including the Fiona Stanley Hospital in Perth, the new clinical research and education hub at the University of Sydney's Camperdown campus and, most recently, the new South East Regional Hospital in Bega. So they come with a very strong level of credentials, and we look forward to seeing them deliver this project in a timely and efficient manner.

The project is now well underway. It is due to be completed in 2018 and to start taking patients shortly afterwards. That will mean that for the first time we will have a quality, purpose-built subacute facility for our city that will be able to be accessed by many hundreds of Canberrans every day. It will ensure that we can take the pressure

off our acute-care hospital service delivery sector and allow them to focus on their tertiary treatment obligations and needs and allow subacute and rehabilitation services to be delivered in a beautiful, purpose-built setting that leverages the partnership we have with the University of Canberra, not only ensuring growth in the development of capacity for our public hospital services but also seeing growth in development of one of our most important tertiary education institutions, the University of Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you please further outline why the government is building the new University of Canberra public hospital?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary. Rehabilitation and aged care are growing areas of demand in our city and that is why we need to provide this purpose-built subacute hospital facility. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recognises that we need to provide specialised multidisciplinary care settings where the primary need for care is the optimisation of the patient's functioning and quality of life. So whether it is rehab, palliative care, geriatric evaluation and management or psycho geriatric care, the University of Canberra public hospital will provide for a number of these areas of demand.

As our population ages, we know that the need for acute care level for people increases. The number of episodes of care increases as we age. We need to ensure that we have a purpose-built subacute facility that meets that need and that demand. I am delighted to see this project up and under construction now because it is vitally important for the quality and future of healthcare provision in our city.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Can the minister explain the sorts of services that will be offered at the new University of Canberra public hospital and how the patients will be able to access those services?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Burch for the supplementary. I can certainly provide some further detail in relation to those matters. In regard to rehabilitation treatment, the hospital will provide for inpatient and day services as well as a hydrotherapy pool service. It will be a teaching facility as well, and that is critically important for the care of people who need subacute care in our city.

It will run tailored multidisciplinary rehabilitation programs. The types of conditions that rehab will be offered for include stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury, motor neurone disease and multiple sclerosis. It will also be providing rehabilitation treatment for people recovering from an amputation or surgery, for trauma recovery and de-conditioning and disability that is associated with an illness. These are critically important services that impact directly on the quality of life of so many people in our community. Rehabilitation will also be offered for conditions associated with ageing such as cognitive impairment, hip and other fractures and also geriatric conditions. These are critically important services.

The adult mental health day service is another component of the UCPH. It will provide recovery-focused services, pharmacotherapy and other health and specialty services including individual and group programs for psychotherapy, psychoeducation, creative therapies, healthy lifestyle and living skills.

Finally, we will see a range of other services provided, for example, the driving assessment rehabilitation service, the prosthetics clinic, a memory assessment service and a falls injury treatment and prevention service.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why did you not announce the cost of the hospital until three years after it was first announced? Why have you still not advised the staff structure of the hospital?

MR CORBELL: You do not announce what you are going to pay until you have got a winning bid. I would have thought that was pretty obvious.

Williamsdale solar farm

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, you used call-in powers to approve the Williamsdale solar farm on the Monaro Highway. Local residents have expressed concerns about this development. Their concerns include the glare that this development will project onto the Monaro Highway and surrounding area and the impact that felling a number of large, significant yellow box trees on the site will have on the ecosystem. Yellow box trees are also said to provide a rich nectar source for the threatened regent honeyeater, an ACT endangered species. Minister, what analysis, if any, did you conduct into the impact that felling the yellow box trees on the site will have on the ecosystem?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Lawder for her question and her interest in the area of Williamsdale as well. Yes, I have used the call-in powers to approve the site in that it would be to the benefit of the territory as a whole for now and into the future, especially in relation to our quest for renewable energy generation. The site was previously owned, as you may be aware, by a service station operator who operated a farm as well. He has now moved on to a different area. The land then moved into the ownership of the Land Development Agency and the process has been worked through there.

In relation to the glare that Ms Lawder mentioned in her question, I have put certain conditions around the approval that non-glare materials be used in the construction for the solar farm.

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MR GENTLEMAN: In relation to yellow box—

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Ms Lawder.

Ms Lawder: My question specifically related to conducting analysis into the impact that felling the yellow box trees on the site would have on the ecosystem.

MADAM SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The question was directly about analysis on felling the trees. I ask Mr Gentleman in accordance with the standing orders to be directly relevant to the question.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I was getting to that part of Ms Lawder's question. She did ask about glare as well in the question, so I wanted to fully answer the question. In relation to the woodlands there, I have taken advice from the Conservator—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, I have taken advice from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna in relation to the yellow box woodland there and given instructions for conditions for the placement of the area surrounding the solar farm and also the number of trees to be removed in that section. Included in those conditions of approval are that those trees will be used for native habitat, so, when felled, they will be used either there or in other locations to support native habitat.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what steps have you taken to minimise the glare generated by this development, to reduce its impact on the local community, including users of the Monaro Highway?

MADAM SPEAKER: I call Mr Gentleman, the Minister for Planning, and you can now be directly relevant to the question of glare.

MR GENTLEMAN: The actual solar farm has not been constructed, so there is no glare at this stage. However, I have issued instructions in the approval process to the proponent to ensure that they use non-glare materials for the solar farm. As you are aware, photovoltaic panels are not a glare material; they take the sun's energy and transfer it into electrical energy for the benefit of territorians.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: We wonder what else will be there when it is built. Minister, what feedback from the community consultation, if any, did you take into account in deciding to exercise your call-in powers to approve this solar farm?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, I did take into account community concerns. There were four submissions during the process through ACTPLA. I looked at all of those submissions. I looked at the particular aspects of those submissions, some of which have been mentioned today in previous questions, and I therefore put those approval conditions on the approval for the solar farm.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, why are you increasingly using planning call-in powers instead of allowing development applications to take their usual and proper course?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have not exceeded my use of call-in powers. It has stayed on about—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: It has stayed on about the average—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: I keep getting interrupted, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry. That does not mean you sit down in the middle of answering a question. You were supposed to be answering a question.

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, I am trying but I keep getting interrupted, Madam Speaker.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Corbell: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. Can we stop the clock, please.

Mr Corbell: Madam Speaker, the opposition continue to interject on the minister. Whilst I appreciate that it is your view that the proceedings of this place are robust, particularly during question time, I think the minister is indicating to you that he is having difficulty answering the question because of the level of interjections opposite.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, members. The minister for planning has the floor to answer the question about call-in powers.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I have not increased the use of call-in powers. They remain the same in the statute—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe!

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, I have not increased the use of call-in powers. They remain the same in the statute. It has worked out in my time as planning minister of about one call in per year. If you were to look at the historic use of call-in powers, it remains on about that average. I am not trying to keep an average. However, I can say that in previous times, under other ministers, there was a much greater use of call-in powers when the Liberals were in power.

Ministers—code of conduct

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing and Gaming. Minister, have you been asked by the CFMEU to act contrary to the ministerial code of conduct?

MR GENTLEMAN: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, has any member of your staff ever been asked by the CFMEU to act contrary to the ministerial code of conduct?

MR GENTLEMAN: No, I have not been informed of any member of my staff being approached in such a manner.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, has any public servant in the agencies under your control ever been asked by the CFMEU or one of their agents to act contrary to the code of conduct of the ACT public service?

MR GENTLEMAN: No, not that I am aware of.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, have you or your staff ever been asked by a union to act contrary to the ministerial code of conduct?

MR GENTLEMAN: Not in my time as a minister or member of this place.

Trade unions—CFMEU

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister. The Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption recommended that the secretary of the ACT branch of the CFMEU should be referred to the Director-General of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in order that consideration may be given to whether he should be charged with and prosecuted for intimidating an inspector contrary to section 190 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. Chief Minister, have you had any verbal or written briefing from your directorate concerning this matter, and if so, when?

MR BARR: Yes, not long after the referral from the royal commission.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, have you given your directorate any verbal or written direction concerning this matter? If so, when, and what was it?

MR BARR: Yes, I have, to respond accordingly to the requests from the trade union royal commission.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, are you aware of any action that CMTED is taking as a consequence of the recommendations by the royal commission concerning the referral of the secretary of the ACT CFMEU?

MR BARR: At this stage, no.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, when and to whom would you expect CMTED to provide a public response concerning its response to this referral?

MR BARR: Through the appropriate channels.

Health—elective surgery

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, in your response on 2 February this year to the release of the 2016 federal report on government services you claimed that “elective surgery waiting times continue to improve”. Minister, does the Federal ROGS report, at table 11A.21, show that, compared to the rest of Australia, in 2014-15 Canberra had longer elective surgery wait times on every measure?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Smyth for his question. To the best of my recollection—and I would need to go and check the specifics of the table—we have seen an overall improvement in the waiting time, we have seen a deterioration in a number of categories for surgery and an improvement in one other category for surgery. But I would be happy to take the particulars of Mr Smyth’s question on notice and make sure that my answer just now was accurate; and, indeed, make sure that his question was accurate based on the relevant ROGS data.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, does the federal report on government services 2016 show that across Australia 74 per cent of elective surgery patients are seen on time but in the ACT only 59 per cent of patients are seen on time?

MR CORBELL: It is the case that our timeliness is less than the performance in other jurisdictions in a range of measures when it comes to elective surgery. That is the case, particularly in relation to long-wait patients. That is why the government has announced a very comprehensive response to the issue of patients waiting longer than the clinically indicated time frame for their surgery. That is why in November last year I announced a major blitz on patients waiting longer than clinically indicated for their surgery. That is why I reported to the Assembly yesterday on the performance so far in relation to those measures, which have seen now close to 300 Canberrans be

removed from that long-wait list because they have been waiting longer than they should have been waiting. That is good news for those 300 Canberrans and other people because they have got their surgery. We are targeting approximately 1,000 additional people to get their surgery; 1,000 people who have been waiting too long for their surgery and who are now going to get it. That is between now and the end of this financial year.

But, as I said to the Assembly yesterday, we are also putting in place a broad range of measures to ensure the sustainability of this level of performance because I do not want this to be just a one-off; this has to be a sustained level of performance to improve timeliness and access to elective surgery. That is why yesterday I outlined a very broad range of measures about what we are doing in this space and why I was so very disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition had nothing to say about all of those issues that I raised in the debate yesterday in this place. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, does the federal ROGS show that across Australia as few as 1.8 per cent of elective surgery patients wait more than 365 days for surgery and as many as five per cent of patients in the ACT wait over a year?

MR CORBELL: It is the case, and I thank Mrs Jones for the question, that we do not see the levels of timeliness that we need and expect when it comes to elective surgery. That is why we are putting in place the measures that I have outlined. If the Liberals were so concerned about this issue and felt it was important to litigate these issues, they had a prime opportunity yesterday. I set out in a comprehensive statement to this place all the steps that are being taken to improve timeliness and efficiency in the delivery of elective surgery in the ACT. What did those opposite have to say about it? Nothing. No-one got to their feet. No-one had anything to say. No-one had any contribution at all.

I set out very clearly this government's agenda to tackle this problem and to tackle it sustainably. I listed—

Mr Hanson: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MR CORBELL: They don't like it, Madam Speaker. You don't like it, do you, Jeremy, because you have been called out?

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order. Sit down, Mr Corbell. Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order on relevance, the question is about why patients in the ACT wait inordinately longer for surgery—that is, the long wait patients—than the rest of the nation, not what the opposition said or did not say in response to a ministerial statement.

MADAM SPEAKER: My recollection, and Mrs Jones can correct me if I am wrong, was that the question was: does ROGS show that 1.8 per cent across Australia wait as opposed to five per cent in the ACT? That is not quite what you said, Mr Hanson. But I will ask the minister to be directly relevant under standing order 118(a).

Mr Hanson: And just as a point of clarification, the answer to that was not provided in the minister's statement yesterday.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not know whether it was. It certainly has not been provided so far in the minister's answer to this question. Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have been very clear that the levels of performance are not at the level they need to be. I have been very clear about that. But I have also been very clear about what we are doing to fix it. The point I make is that if those opposite were as concerned about this matter as they would appear to be today, perhaps they might have engaged in a substantive discussion about the steps that need to be taken to address it. This government is taking those steps. Three hundred more Canberrans and other residents have received the elective surgery they need because of this government's reforms. We are putting in place sustainable measures to make sure this is an ongoing level of performance that can be sustained and delivered so that we drive down these discrepancies. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, when will you scrap light rail so that funds can be spent as the community expects fixing the health system where such funds are needed?

MR CORBELL: Over the life of the light rail contract we are talking about expenditure in the ACT government budget in terms of total expenditures of less than one per cent. Over the same period of time we will spend 35 times more on health services, based on current levels of expenditure, than we will ever spend on light rail.

Those opposite can make whatever claims they like about this matter but those are the statistics when it comes to expenditure in health service delivery. Unlike the Liberal Party at a federal level and locally that seem prepared to cut \$600 million out of grants to the ACT for healthcare services, we are genuinely interested in improving the delivery of healthcare services. We are genuinely committed to making sure we build the infrastructure and improve the access and timeliness that is needed. Those opposite are only interested in cutting health funding and impacting on our public hospitals, and we will be holding you to account for the position of your federal colleagues and your endorsement of them.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, you are on a warning.

Economy—higher education

MS BURCH: My question is to the minister for higher education. I ask the minister to provide the Assembly with an update on the importance of higher education and vocational education and training to the ACT economy.

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Burch for the question. I would also like to acknowledge her leadership of and passion for in particular the vocational education sector as the previous minister. As we all know, the ACT has one of the most educated populations in Australia, indeed the world. Equally, the ACT economy is a strong and vibrant economy. It is an economy that is constantly adapting and evolving, thanks largely to this ACT Labor government that is working hard to diversify our economy and to ensure that it is diverse, resilient and generating secure, well-paid jobs.

Our impressive higher education and vocational education and training sectors are crucial elements of the strong economy. These sectors provide the skills Canberrans need to work in the jobs of the future and to have fulfilling careers that help them to get ahead while also ensuring our terrific ACT economy continues to grow.

A comprehensive connection between education skills, the workforce and our economic partners will better enable our economy to seize the opportunities available to our smart city. The ACT government is committed to strengthening this relationship as per the recommendation of the second national workforce development strategy of 2013.

We are focused on continuing to create the right business environment and using our competitive strengths to accelerate innovation and investment. A key to this is working with the business community and the university sector to create a city with its own distinct economic identity. Part of this is the creation of the CBR innovation network—a first for Australia—bringing together five nationally and internationally renowned higher education and research institutions to work with the ACT government and the private sector to grow Canberra’s innovation ecosystem.

We are lucky enough to have nationally and internationally recognised research and education institutions right here in the ACT. The ANU is Australia’s highest ranked university and sits amongst the world’s top research universities. Along with the University of Canberra, the University of New South Wales Canberra, the Australian Catholic University, Charles Sturt University and the Canberra Institute of Technology, these institutions give Canberra an edge as a world-class knowledge economy.

The ACT government will continue its commitment to strengthening our higher education and VET sectors. As the new Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, I am very pleased to see how strong these sectors are, and they are only getting stronger.

The strength of our universities is recognised nationally and internationally. The vast numbers of international students being drawn to Canberra’s universities is impressive. We can be proud that our universities attract students of such diverse backgrounds. The direct result of this is showcased in the \$2.75 billion in value the ACT’s higher education and research institutions bring to our economy each year. We benefit from university researchers at the ANU and UC and the research work of organisations such as CSIRO. They are on our doorstep and their successes only serve to strengthen our economy, and our partnerships will help us grow.

Just this week we turned the first sod on the new public hospital at the University of Canberra, showcasing the partnership with the University of Canberra to enable them to grow and thrive. In this instance, in addition to improving health services, the construction of the hospital will also see more jobs over the coming years, as well as improving economic activity in the local area.

Our vocational education and training sector also excels in its ability to look at the big picture and adapt to our rapidly developing economy. Canberra's VET sector is flexible in actively identifying the jobs of the future and providing Canberrans with the skills to fill these jobs. This allows businesses to meet their current and future skills needs.

In particular, this government acknowledges the important role of CIT as both the ACT's public provider and its largest registered training organisation. CIT trains 72 per cent of apprentices in the ACT in close partnership with their employers. I am also looking forward to the establishment of the new CIT campus in Tuggeranong. The higher education and VET sectors generate knowledge and equip Canberrans with skills that help our economy excel. I look forward to working with the stakeholders in these sectors. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Can the minister outline how capital metro will interact with the ACT higher education sector?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Burch for the supplementary question. Capital metro will provide many benefits to Canberra, and the higher education sector will receive its share. The first and most obvious will be the relationship with jobs. Local industry participation is expected to include 60 apprentices and trainee roles during construction. These are real jobs for real Canberrans, getting a great start in education and in their working lives.

It is also expected to lead to 40 University of New South Wales Canberra work experience placements during the construction phase. This will help in building capability in engineering, including opportunities for students studying engineering courses open to civilians. Engineering capability is critical to building a robust economy.

The project is also expected to lead to 10 new graduate jobs, providing immediate transition from study to employment, and better links between our higher education sector and our labour market. More broadly, the 20-year operations phase will bring opportunities for the people of Canberra in hospitality, technical education and trades, including construction, project management and rail systems operation—a booming global industry.

This project is yet another example of how the government is making linkages and investment in our economy's strengths, the global economy and our vision for the future. Canberra Metro has also publicly stated that 90 per cent of jobs will be sourced locally during the construction phase and 75 per cent of jobs will be sourced locally during the operational phase.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you provide an update on the progress of recent reforms to the operation of the Canberra Institute of Technology?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Porter for the question. The reforms to the Canberra Institute of Technology were to establish a CIT board and to reframe the role of the chief executive officer. I was very pleased to welcome Leanne Cover to the role of CEO last month. She brings a wealth of experience to the role. Ms Cover has an extensive background in education and training and has been a leader in the service delivery of education and training here in Canberra, as is well known to members here.

The aim of the reforms is to allow CIT to operate more autonomously and be able to effectively respond to changes in the local economy and in the VET sector. The CIT board began operating on 1 July 2015 and has since met three times. A subcommittee has been established to drive business development.

In addition, a planning session has taken place with a work plan from January to June of this year. The board's aim is to properly prepare CIT to thrive and stand out in an increasingly competitive training market. The first half of 2016 will be spent developing a new strategic plan to achieve this.

CIT is already delivering great things when it comes to preparing students for the jobs of the future, for example, by offering qualifications in areas like our leading renewable energy sector. By offering qualifications and bespoke training facilities in renewable wind technology, we can establish the ACT as the premier knowledge and education hub in this emerging field in Australia and internationally. It also equips the next generation of workers with practical skills that ensure they are at the forefront of a rapidly growing multinational industry.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, can you please indicate how the benefits of the government's policies are being realised in the vocational education and training space as demonstrated in the recent ROGS data?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Porter for the question. The ACT VET sector has performed extremely well in the latest 2015 report on government services. In the ROGS report, the ACT had the highest proportions of VET graduates in employment and/or in further study after completing their training, at 91.3 per cent; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET graduates in employment after completing their training, at 89 per cent.

The government has also responded to recommendations and introduced a number of policies to strengthen the ACT VET sector. These include the reforms to CIT that I briefly outlined, also the ACT's skilled capital initiative providing \$21 million over three years from 2015 to 2017 to improve access to high quality skills training in areas of need. The ACT Australian apprenticeships program has been revised to build on strong training employment outcomes for graduates to better address the skills needs of local businesses here in the ACT.

These policies will increase competitiveness and maximise employment outcomes for VET trained students here in the ACT and strengthen our local labour market.

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

Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption

Debate resumed.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3.16): It is a new year and a great opportunity for those opposite to recycle their previous motions. We have seen Mr Wall here hitching his wagon to the tainted and partisan royal commission, just as he did in his motion of August 2015. Given that he has actually given that opportunity to me, this will provide me with the chance to go to some of my greatest hits from that occasion. That motion was all about politics and no policies.

This motion is an obvious attempt to continue the Liberal Party's war on the unions and, as part of that, a war on workers' rights and entitlements. That was certainly something I said last time, and it remains as pertinent today as it was when Mr Wall first brought his motion forward just over six months ago. I would love to see Mr Wall put more effort into policies and good reforms for Canberra because, whilst I am sure he has ideas, we have not seen so many of them. They tend to be more of these political kinds of motions.

The Liberal Party's anti-union agenda fails yet again to address the importance of worker health and safety in the ACT. It fails to understand that unions play an important part in helping to address these issues through education, support, surveillance and contributions to policy development. Construction site safety has been a clear focus for the CFMEU, the ALP and the Greens over the last few years, and work such as the building quality forum and the *Getting home safely* report have made a material difference in worker health and safety in the ACT.

Members have no doubt keenly followed the progress of the Abbott-Turnbull royal commission into trade union governance. As I recall, the report was released in the week between Christmas and New Year. An objective viewer would wonder whether that indicated the commission found less than it was seeking to find. I think "taking out the trash" is the expression most commonly used to describe this approach.

We still do not really know what the commission found because the government has refused to release secret chapter 6. This is the document that Malcolm Turnbull is using to justify the reintroduction of the Australian Building and Construction Commission. But you cannot read it. That is right—you cannot read it. And if you thought things could not get any stranger, the Turnbull government is now offering the Senate crossbench secret viewings of secret chapter 6, but anyone who takes up the opportunity for a secret viewing cannot talk about what they have seen. Presumably secret chapter 6 is such a thrilling read that those around you will spontaneously vote to resurrect Work Choices or the ABCC in the Senate.

My colleague on the hill, Adam Bandt MP, makes a fine point in relation to this matter. He said if the government think they have facts that will change people's minds, they should do what every other government has done before them and bring them to the parliament so that we can debate them.

As Mr Wall's motion notes, Commissioner Heydon referred the ACT secretary of the CFMEU to the director-general of the Chief Minister's directorate for investigation, and I have no doubt that due process is being followed. Like others, I await any outcomes of that process.

If any CFMEU officials are ultimately found guilty, I expect opponents will use that as an attempt to taint the whole union movement, and I think that would be quite unfair. As I said last August when Mr Wall brought his last motion, to write off an entire organisation based on the conduct of a few would be rash and reckless. It would be like writing off the entire Liberal Party based on the extravagance and hubris of Bronwyn Bishop.

In terms of its structure and membership, neither the Greens nor I have any special relationship with the unions. In my role as a Greens crossbench member I have met with the CFMEU a handful of times since the last election, just as I have met with other unions, other stakeholders in work health and safety, and also with groups who probably help fund the Canberra Liberals' election campaigns, because all of these people are stakeholders here in the ACT, and I meet with people who have got relevant things to say.

As I said last August, I will continue to meet with unions, including the CFMEU, on industrial relations, on worker safety and on any other matters of common ground or indeed of disagreement. Of course, there are areas of disagreement across the policy spectrum. Remember, of course, that the CFMEU represents people who work in mining and forestry as well as in construction. We are not always in agreement, but in the ACT the focus of the CFMEU is the construction sector, and the Greens have a strong industrial relations policy in this area.

In terms of the mining and forestry arms of the union, it is important to note that the Greens have never swayed on our firm policy positions when it comes to issues like protecting the environment and transitioning to a carbon-free, renewable energy based future. It is that policy position that also means the Greens do not accept donations from Adani, the massive resource company that currently presents one of the greatest environmental threats to Australia through its plans to open up coal mining in the Galilee Basin in Queensland. I note this environmental threat and massive contribution to climate change has not stopped either the Australian Liberal Party or, for that matter, the Australian Labor Party accepting Adani donations, and that is something the Greens have never done and never will do.

The motion points out, in a rather desperate and base attempt at smearing, that the CFMEU have donated to the Greens party, and yes, that is true. It is, in fact, a matter of public record. And why did they do this? As the CFMEU have publicly stated, their donations to the Greens were in its members' interests, and those donations were in

their members' interests because the Greens have excellent industrial relations policies. Greens policies are focused on supporting workers, on fair industrial relations agreements and on safety, and we will continue to push for progress in these areas in parliaments across Australia. Of course, based on their policies, the Liberal Party will not be expecting any donations from unions any time soon. Time after time they vote against initiatives brought to this Assembly to improve the situation of workers, and now they want to resurrect the ABCC as well.

On the issue of donations, I emphasise again that the Greens, including the ACT Greens branch, have an extremely sound and ethical donations policy. I think it is incontestable that our approach to donations, campaign funding and the integrity of the political system is most in line with public sentiment.

The ACT Greens believe that political campaigns should be funded through limited public funding. We believe that political campaigns should not be reliant on third-party donations, and we believe this because publicly funded elections promote more equitable access to democratic participation and reduce the risk of corruption through donations.

In the current situation, where donations including “gifts in kind” as defined by the Australian Electoral Commission are used by parties throughout the political cycle, the Australian Greens, using transparent practices, will accept donations, subject to ethical review. This ethical review is performed by the ACT Greens donations reference group. This group applies the Greens donations policy to any donation referred to it, including any donations totalling over \$1,000 within a 12-month period.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Doszpot!

MR RATTENBURY: The Greens donations policy is available on our website, but I will mention key points here for the benefit of members like Mr Doszpot so that he does not need to keep interjecting.

The policy seeks to ensure that the values and aspirations of all donors are consistent with those encapsulated in the policies and charter of the ACT Greens. The party is able to accept donations only in support of the existing aims of the party and, to be clear about this, we do not change our policies as the result of any donation. Our policies are developed and ratified by the membership of our party. Every member of our party has the opportunity to participate in the development of policies, and they are ratified by the membership of our party.

The policy makes clear that the acceptance of a donation does not imply endorsement of the activities, undertakings or processes of the donor. The ACT Greens maintain transparency in donor identity by making public at the end of each month all donors and the cumulative total of their donations to the ACT Greens over the previous 12-month period where those cumulative totals amount to \$1,000 or more. This is above and beyond the requirements of the ACT Electoral Commission, and it is above and beyond the standards that either the ALP or the Liberal Party hold themselves to.

Would the Greens accept donations from developers like the other parties do? No, we do not, and we will not. Would the Greens accept donations from defence contractors or pharmaceutical companies or mining companies like Adani? We do not, and we will not. The Greens accept donations only through our donations reference group, and they must be consistent with our values and principles.

Through this process in the past the Greens have accepted donations from the CFMEU. Will this happen again in the future? That is not for me to say. As always, any donation will go through the party's process, and the party will make a decision based on the ethics, principles and the guidelines that I have outlined to the Assembly today.

Of course this is not the first time we have had cause to discuss the low standards to which other parties hold themselves when it comes to donations. It was in February one year ago that the Canberra Liberals and ACT Labor joined to remove donation caps from ACT electoral law—yes, removal of donation caps. One would have thought that any MLA who believed in improving our democratic institutions and reducing the risk of corruption would have supported measures that would reduce the potential influence that could be bought through political donations—not these two parties here, not on the day it counted, and certainly not—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe!

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Wall supported this donations cap, as did Mr Coe, who again is busily interjecting across the chamber. It was one of those 16 to 1 votes that happen in this place that show the Canberra Liberals' true colours far more clearly than their set piece private members' business.

I will not be supporting this motion today. It sinks to a familiar low in terms of policy-free politics. As I said in August, the ACT Greens will not be taking ethical advice from any branch of the Liberal Party.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.26): I rise only to say a couple of things. Firstly, it is interesting that Mr Rattenbury should say that they are righteous because they supported caps last term. What he failed to say was that he did not support a cap on union donations. Unions were allowed to donate as much as they liked but everybody else had a cap. And that apparently was okay by Mr Rattenbury. That was fine. But now that we have a change to that, he suddenly claims to be righteous. There is obviously a double standard here, because he and the Greens have been beneficiaries of CFMEU money.

Secondly, it is interesting that Mr Rattenbury should talk about their great fundraising code. But what he failed to mention, which I have spoken about in this place before, is their Australian-leading database, which captures information about people all over Canberra and indeed Australia. And the best that I can recall is the bit about the bequest targets and the information they go to about how to identify bequest targets.

In effect you have the Greens knocking on the doors of the frail as bequest targets and potential donors to their campaign. That is the righteous fundraising code that he is spruiking here. I think Mr Rattenbury needs to be very, very careful before he claims to be so virtuous when it comes to fundraising.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (3.28), in reply: I must say that I am not surprised by the responses from those opposite, be it Mr Gentleman or Mr Rattenbury, and the political road that they chose to take in the responses, calling the royal commission a political toy, and I think that is exceptionally disappointing. Regardless of the motivation to establish the royal commission into trade union governance, the evidence is now before us. The truth has been highlighted by so many Australians across the country. So many hard working Australians took the effort to make a submission to the royal commission, to risk their livelihoods, their businesses and everything that they have worked so hard to create, to tell the truth about what it is like to do business in the construction industry. So many businesses locally took that road.

I urge Mr Gentleman to take the time to go out and talk to these businesses that appeared before the royal commission and discuss with them what it is like in the industry, what kinds of conditions, threats, harassment, intimidation these businesses are forced to face at the behest of the CFMEU in this town, and then I urge him to say simply, “Your issues are purely politically motivated.” I challenge you to do that, minister, because genuinely so many people in this city have had to suffer through some absolutely dastardly acts, and I think it is absolutely abhorrent that those opposite refuse even to draw a line in the sand and say, “These actions are not acceptable.”

That is all we are calling for. This is going to be a clear, defining policy issue, I think, at the election between the Liberals, who do not stand for this kind of behaviour in workplaces, and those opposite that are happy to do it so long as it keeps their union masters quiet. And that is what this seems to be. They are all conflicted. They are all beneficiaries of the union’s largesse, yet when it comes time to take action and stand and say those kinds of behaviours such as intimidation, corruption, coercion and the thuggery are not acceptable in any workplace—be it in the construction industry, be it in the cleaning sector, be it in retail, be it in the security industry, regardless—they do nothing. That kind of behaviour does not have a place in the ACT.

Those opposite are being absolutely spineless in refusing to take a stand and, one, acknowledge the evidence that the royal commission uncovered whilst it was here in the ACT and, two, walk away from the organisations that have perpetrated so much of this behaviour in the ACT. I am disappointed, as I said, that those opposite cannot see the imperative, the desire and the need to walk away from organisations that act like this. Need I say, I am not surprised.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 9

Mr Coe	Ms Lawder	Mr Barr	Ms Fitzharris
Mr Doszpot	Mr Smyth	Ms Berry	Mr Gentleman
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Dr Bourke	Ms Porter
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Jones		Mr Corbell	

Question so resolved in the negative.

Radio Print Handicapped

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.34): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) radio station 1RPH, radio for the print handicapped, has been providing a reading service for people with print disabilities for over 30 years;
- (b) it has received annual funding from the Commonwealth, through the Community Broadcasting Foundation since 1983;
- (c) it has received funding from the ACT Government through Disability ACT;
- (d) the new NDIS arrangements have resulted in funding from this source being discontinued from 1 July 2016; and
- (e) this funding, representing some 25% of the total revenue for 1RPH, will put significant pressure on its ability to deliver its service; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to continue funding the service provided by 1RPH, if necessary from an alternative funding source.

I have been a volunteer at Radio 1RPH for longer than I can remember. I do not remember exactly when I started but I know that it was before I became a member of this place. I know, as a result of being a volunteer at Radio Print Handicapped and because of the feedback that I have received over the years, how important radio for the print handicapped is in the ACT and how important it is across the nation.

I have moved this motion today to draw attention to the problem being faced by our own 1RPH, Radio for Print Handicapped. It is also a problem that will become a national problem for radio for the print handicapped as the NDIS rolls out. My motion is a simple one. It acknowledges the important role of Radio 1RPH in the ACT community and calls on the government to continue the funding that it has previously provided after 1 July this year.

I want to put on the record that I am not blaming the ACT government for the stopping of funding that 1RPH will experience on 1 July. It has been a process that has been brought about by the implementation of the national disability insurance scheme. Quite frankly, the summary of events is that the disability funding money that was previously disbursed by the ACT government has been handed over to the commonwealth and a range of funding arrangements have come into place which has meant that radio for the print handicapped across the country will cease to be funded as the NDIS rolls out.

The NDIS trial is much further advanced in the ACT, which means that radio for the print handicapped in the ACT and Tasmania will be the first radio stations to lose their disability funding, and that will happen in July. So I want to put on the record that I am not blaming the ACT government for this, but I am calling on the ACT government to step into the gap and ensure the continued funding of Radio Print Handicapped. This matter has been discussed by the Liberal party room and we have agreed that in government we would continue the modest funding of Radio for Print Handicapped to ensure it continues its services.

I will give a little recap. The role of Radio Print Handicapped is a diverse one. It provides access for people who have a print handicap. That is not just people who have vision impairment but people who may have a physical disability or who may not be able to lift and manipulate print or people who, for whatever reasons, through a disability or disadvantage, have never obtained a high level of reading. It seeks to address their needs to be up to date with current affairs.

We do this through the work of countless volunteers, who read everything from local news, the births, deaths and marriages, national news, editorials, news on a daily basis every morning and every afternoon. The newspapers are read for the benefit of Canberra citizens and people in the region. There are also specialist programs on particular subjects, reading from particular magazines like the *Guardian Weekly*, the *New Scientist*, and more popular magazines like women's magazines such as *New Idea* and the like, providing a service to people across a range of interests. There are also regular morning and afternoon book readings and children's book readings.

The people who participate in the book reading process provide a great resource for people. It takes an extraordinary amount of time to prepare for a book reading, to record it and to have it put to air. Those book readings are shared around through the Radio Print Handicapped network. A reader in Tasmania might have read a particular book, and that will be shared around the network. A volunteer would put in many hundreds of hours reading a novel, for instance, for recording and broadcast; it will be rebroadcast so that their work is well regarded and well rewarded.

Over the years there has been extension of the services of Radio Print Handicapped by extending transmitters to Wagga and Junee, with support from local government agencies and the New South Wales government, to broadcast to Wagga and Junee. On weekday mornings there is a special hour-long session of reading papers from Wagga and Junee rather than just the *Canberra Times*.

All of this is done on the smell of an oily rag. Radio 1RPH has two part-time staff, a coordinator and a technical officer. The rest of the work is done by countless volunteers. Radio Print Handicapped, 1RPH, like all RPH stations, receives funding from the Community Broadcasting Foundation, and has done so for a number of years, back into the previous millennium. There are many other private organisations that fund Radio Print Handicapped. They also receive revenue from radio campaigns, government advertising and the like.

Over the years, the Community Services Directorate, and before that the community services department, has provided funding through Disability ACT to the tune of about \$38,000 a year. This represents 25 per cent of the funding that was received by Radio 1RPH over the years. I would like to put it in context. As I said before, that money has been transferred from the ACT to the national disability insurance scheme, where it has been dispensed. There are three tiers of expenditure under the national disability insurance scheme. Tier 1 is functions which are not being funded by the national disability insurance scheme, and that is general advocacy in the area of disability. Tier 2 is information linkage and coordination. Tier 3 is where the bulk of the money goes, which is funding to individuals.

Without consultation with the print handicapped radio community, the national disability insurance scheme has decided that the work of Radio Print Handicapped falls in tier 1, and therefore will receive no funding under the national disability insurance scheme. I need to repeat this, Madam Deputy Speaker: this was done without consultation with radio for the print handicapped across the country. The first that anyone knew of this was in mid-December last year, when the ACT and Tasmania were told that their funding would run out on 30 June this year. So in mid-December 2015 they were told they would cease funding under the NDIS at the end of June.

As I said the ACT and Tasmania are the first cabs off the rank, or the first heads to rest on the chopping block. But with the rest of the rollout of the national disability scheme across other jurisdictions, other radio for the print handicapped stations across the country will feel the cut in the time to come. This is not just a question of the future of Radio Print Handicapped in the ACT and region; it is a question of the future of radio for the print handicapped across Australia.

There is an immediate problem, from our point of view. Radio Print Handicapped here in the ACT, 1RPH, have been quite candid that if they lose 25 per cent of their funding they will have to look very seriously at reducing the number of programs that they produce in Canberra, ceasing weekend or overnight broadcasts, ceasing to broadcast into Wagga and Junee, or reducing transmission power and broadcast reach to reduce electricity costs.

This will have a substantial impact on the users of radio for the print handicapped. I think it is a matter of considerable importance for the people of the ACT that this important community service may be brought to its knees for the want of \$38,000 a year.

As I said previously, the Canberra Liberals have committed that for the foreseeable future we will continue the funding as it currently stands if we are elected to government. But we will also be working with Radio Print Handicapped to help it to find and identify other sources of funding. As is the case with all of these ventures, they need to be flexible and be able to appeal to philanthropic organisations to continue their work. Radio Print Handicapped, 1RPH, does this already, and it does receive private donations from time to time. Remembering that this is a 1½-professional person outfit, it is very hard for small organisations like this to devote large amounts of time on grant applications and seeking funding elsewhere when their business is actually putting radio programs to air.

This is an important matter, and I call on the Assembly to support my motion, so that we recognise the great work being done by Radio Print Handicapped and continue to ensure that they are funded adequately beyond 30 June this year. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Disability, Minister for Small Business and the Arts and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (3.46): I start by thanking Mrs Dunne for bringing this motion forward today and for highlighting the good work done by Radio 1RPH over a 30-year period. Indeed I was delighted to join in 1RPH's 30th anniversary celebrations on 20 June last year.

I state from the outset that this government will continue to work with Radio 1RPH to secure its financial future. But for the benefit of the Assembly I would like to take a few moments to explain the background to this matter.

The national disability insurance scheme, which began in the ACT in July 2014, is transforming the way people with disability receive their supports. By 2019-20 the ACT government will be providing \$167 million through the NDIS, a major investment in people with disability, their carers and the community sector. The NDIS is working with people to identify the supports they need to live their life and achieve their goals, such as independence, involvement in the community, education and employment. The scheme gives people with disability, their families and their carers greater choice and control over how, when and where their supports are provided.

To meet this government's financial contribution for the delivery of the NDIS for ACT residents, all disability program funding, such as that received by Radio 1RPH, is being transferred to the commonwealth. As part of these new arrangements, an information linkages and capacity-building system known as ILC will connect community and informal supports, along with the mainstream services and individually funded packages. This will enable a holistic response to people with disability, whilst also enabling far greater choice and control for people with disability, their families and carers.

ILC will support people with disability and their families to build the necessary skills, resources and confidence to participate in the community or to access the same kind of programs and services as other people. The NDIA has been given responsibility for and funding to implement the national ILC policy framework, all of which has been endorsed by the Disability Reform Council.

As part of these new arrangements, the NDIA consulted with the ACT government to identify currently funded programs that meet the criteria for ILC and the ACT government has negotiated a transitional funding arrangement for the 2016-17 financial year for services that are in the scope of the ILC national framework.

Regrettably, a small number of organisations such as Radio 1RPH will not receive funding in 2016-17, and meetings were held with each of the impacted organisations in December 2015 to confirm that their block funding would be impacted. However, it needs to be stated that some of these organisations will be able to change their business models to deliver tier 3 supports within a participants plan. Where this happens, these organisations will receive cash payments direct from the NDIA for the services they provide.

The ACT government is committed to supporting all disability providers through the transition to the national disability insurance scheme, including the implementation of ILC. We are investing heavily in resources to assist providers like Radio 1RPH to prepare and, where necessary, adapt their business and service delivery models.

New programs were launched at the end of 2015 to support ACT disability service providers to operate successfully in the new NDIS environment. These include Ready4, a scheme led by National Disability Services, partnering with ACTCOSS and RSM Bird Cameron. The scheme delivers direct one-on-one and small group support for the NDIS service offer and includes business, system and governance model development. The program has \$600,000 of funding.

The Nous Group's "opening doors", partnering with Lifestyle Solutions and First Peoples Disability Network, provides an intensive, targeted response to Aboriginal organisations looking to build their capacity to enter disability provision in the ACT, and 10 to 15 selected mainstream disability providers looking to deliver more culturally sensitive services. This program has \$440,000 worth of funding.

The Julia Farr Association's Purple Orange provides intensive assistance to 10 disability providers committed to developing a sustainable, high performing, person-centred workforce. This program has \$360,000 of funding. Furthermore, in 2015 ACT providers had two opportunities to apply for tailored NDIS development assistance through NDIS business investment packages valued at up to \$50,000 per organisation. Applications opened on 1 February 2016 for a further round of business investment packages. ILC providers, including Radio 1RPH, wishing to change their service model will be prioritised for this funding.

Print handicapped radio has to date received a \$20,000 funding and governance package to better prepare the organisation to strengthen its business practices. Radio 1RPH previously received \$38,227 per annum from the ACT government for the provision of alternative formats of communication by providing radio broadcasting. Officers from the Community Services Directorate have met with representatives of the radio station and will continue to do so in order to support them during this period as they transition their services to a sustainable model.

I move the following amendment which has been circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “calls on the ACT Government to” in paragraph (2), substitute:

- “(a) work with 1RPH to identify alternative funding streams and business development opportunities in order to sustain its financial viability;
- (b) write to the Federal Minister for Disability drawing this matter to his attention; and
- (c) report back to the Assembly by the last day of the June sitting period.”.

As is highlighted in my amendment, the Community Services Directorate will continue to work with radio 1RPH to identify alternative funding streams and business development opportunities. I shall also be writing to the federal minister for disability to draw his attention to this matter, and I undertake to report back to this Assembly concerning this matter by the last sitting day of June this year.

Radio 1RPH has been a part of the Canberra broadcasting community for 30 years. Its services are valued by its visually impaired listeners, and we shall work with Radio 1RPH in looking at every option in order to sustain its financial viability.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3.53): I welcome the opportunity to discuss Radio 1RPH today, and I thank Mrs Dunne for bringing forward the motion regarding the future of Radio 1RPH. I know that she has had a long, enthusiastic involvement with the station, so it is quite appropriate for her to bring this forward today and raise it for the Assembly’s attention. I appreciate the comments she made about the spirit of that.

As members have identified, Radio 1RPH has had a proud 30-year history in Canberra, providing radio for people who have visual difficulties and disabilities. Book readings, the BBC news, newspaper headlines, death notices—the radio station provides an invaluable service to those who are handicapped in their reading skills and cannot read for themselves easily. In that context the changes brought about by the national disability insurance scheme are significant for Radio 1RPH.

There is no doubt that the implementation of the NDIS has not been without its challenges. The ACT has been at the forefront of those challenges, and agencies and organisations here have had to problem-solve their way around some of the new processes.

The intent of the NDIS was to ensure that people with a disability had greater control over how their money was spent and enabled them to purchase the services they need to improve their quality of life. The model has been easier to implement for individual service purchases, the tier 3 services, but it has been harder to manage with other types of services.

There are a number of examples. Information and linkages under the scheme are to be provided under tier 2 funding where providers are providing services that cannot be funded by individual purchase. Information services and services that provide early advice or referral are hard to purchase through an individual package.

Radio 1RPH sees itself as one of those tier 2 information services that should receive block funding through the NDIA. The Disability Reform Council released broad parameters about who could qualify for tier 2 funding. Radio 1RPH, on my advice, thought that they would qualify, but unfortunately that has turned out not to be the case.

The ACT government, through Disability ACT, provided \$38,000 in this past financial year, and Radio 1RPH also receives funding from the commonwealth through the Community Broadcasting Foundation. But that funding, as with the majority of the ACT's disability funding, was handed over as part of the bilateral negotiations between the ACT and the commonwealth for the NDIA. Unfortunately for Radio 1RPH, the NDIA has determined that they do not qualify for tier 2 funding despite the guidance given by the Disability Reform Council. This is an unfortunate situation, because the ACT funding forms around 25 per cent of the funding base for the station. Without it, some of the scenarios that Mrs Dunne has painted in her introductory remarks about the reduction of services or reduced transmission hours are potential consequences.

I know that Radio 1RPH are making representations to the federal department of communications and have also met with the NDIA head office on this policy decision, but so far to no avail. They are also anticipating making a representation to the Minister for Social Services, Christian Porter, to explain this situation and see what can be done. In the meantime, I will be supporting the amendment that Dr Bourke has put forward today so that the government can work directly with Radio 1RPH to see what other options would be available for the ACT government to provide additional funding.

This is a difficult issue. Members have supported the transition to the NDIS and the philosophy of it. There is an empowerment for the individual, and money goes out, but clearly there are issues that are perhaps not as black and white as we all thought when we welcomed the NDIS. This is one of those examples where the implementation is proving to be difficult and problematic.

I trust that Mrs Dunne will find the amendment that Dr Bourke has presented a positive contribution to the debate. I welcome the commitment to identifying alternative funding streams and business development opportunities. I welcome Dr Bourke's indication that he will write to the federal minister for disability—this is something we raised with his office, and direct representation can only assist—and give the Assembly an update, which, if I recall correctly, was in Mrs Dunne's original motion.

I trust that this is a well-received amendment and I do hope that we can sort this situation out. Radio 1RPH does really add to our community—and to the broader community, as we were told earlier, with broader geographic spread than traditionally. We need to work out how it can best access additional funds given the changing system that we are facing with the introduction of the national disability insurance scheme.

I thank my colleagues for the conversation today. I think this is important. We need to find ways to help with the transition. I look forward to the report back in June, hopefully with good news.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.58): On the amendment, I thank Dr Bourke and Mr Rattenbury for their contributions in relation to the amendment. I believe that the amendment is well intentioned, but I do not believe that it goes far enough.

My office spoke with Dr Bourke's office yesterday in relation to this amendment and said that what was being proposed by Dr Bourke would be acceptable if it were added to the motion rather than deleting words and substituting the motion. What we are actually having here is a lot of platitudinous things—"we will work", "we will help people to identify", "we will raise it with the federal minister for disabilities". That has already been done. I welcome that Dr Bourke will be likewise doing that. And yes, we do need to report back to the Assembly on the state of Radio Print Handicapped as it goes out of its funding cycle.

But there is no safety net for the Radio Print Handicapped. They were given assurances by the disability council that they were likely to be funded. That has not proven to be the case. What we are having here is platitudinous assurances, again, from the government that they will work with Radio Print Handicapped, but there is no safety net for Radio Print Handicapped.

Dr Bourke gave a list of programs that met the funding requirements for the ILC program—organisations that were receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars for advocacy and the like. But he seemed to be saying that Radio Print Handicapped have to change their service model and that only if they change their service model to become some sort of provider of individual services will they be funded. It is not in their charter to be a provider of individual services, and it would be very hard for a volunteer organisation that runs a radio station to start providing individual services to people under the NDIS.

Dr Bourke and Mr Rattenbury have said that they value Radio Print Handicapped, that the community values Radio Print Handicapped, and that they are looking at every option—every option except one: to continue to fund our community organisation, Radio Print Handicapped.

Yes, there needs to be more done, as I have said before. We need to look at this not just through the prism of ACT issues but to look at the whole future and viability of Radio Print Handicapped across the nation. It is incumbent upon the disability minister to be raising this at disability ministers meetings, because there will be other radio organisations across the country who are starting to understand that they have a grim future.

In the meantime, every option has to include the continued funding of our community radio organisation by our community through a modest, as we have said, \$38,000 from the ACT community.

I would be happy to support the amendment if it were an addition, not a substitution. My office asked Dr Bourke's office to consider it as an addition, not a substitution. While this has now been proposed as a substitution, I do not think that the Canberra Liberals can support it, because it does not provide an option for Radio Print Handicapped.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.03): I have great pleasure in supporting my colleague Mrs Dunne in the motion she has brought forward for debate today, because it is an issue about which I am most passionate and because 1RPH is so deserving of public support and funding.

As Mrs Dunne has highlighted, 1RPH is an unfortunate victim of a consequence of the introduction of NDIS. Previously 1RPH received funding from the ACT government under the Disability ACT banner. When the NDIS rollout comes into full effect in July of this year, 1RPH will have this funding stream stopped. It accounts for 25 per cent of its total funding, so it is not an insignificant amount, as Mrs Dunne has highlighted. As a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers—Madam Deputy Speaker, with your background you would be well aware of what volunteers in Canberra provide—it will struggle for funding. 1RPH will struggle for funding if this is cut. It will not be easy in these tight times for not-for-profits to easily replace this funding.

1RPH has played an important role in the delivery of services to the Canberra community and, more recently, an even wider audience. It had humble beginnings, starting with just a few volunteers broadcasting a limited range of programs from a small house in Ainslie from April 1985. In 1987 it moved to its present location on a five-acre block in Gungahlin. I understand that students from CIT building trades built the 20-square purpose-designed offices and studios, and since that time those studios have been well used.

I am proud to say, and I have to declare, that I have been one of the volunteer newsreaders and have spent considerable time in the studio at Gungahlin, along with many others, including Mrs Dunne, who, along with her husband, has done a sterling job over the past years. Mrs Dunne cannot quite remember how long it is, but it is certainly well in excess of 10 years. I think it is 12 years.

For those not familiar with the work that 1RPH does, let me list some of the work. Radio 1RPH provides news and other information needed by people who are print handicapped. 1RPH volunteers help people to overcome their disadvantage by turning print into sound, providing a broad range of detailed information which is available in printed form but not provided by other radio and television stations.

The definition of “print handicapped” is fairly broad. It covers people who are blind or vision impaired; people who are paraplegic or quadriplegic; people who are severely affected by arthritis, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis or dyslexia; those who have never learned to read; people from non-English-speaking backgrounds who understand but cannot read the language; and people who have suffered a stroke—all very important members of our community who need to be looked after. It is

estimated that 10 per cent of people living in Canberra and the surrounding area are print handicapped. That means potentially a daily audience of 30,000 people, not an insignificant number of our community.

Sitting as it does on the AM frequency at 1125, 1RPH sits between popular commercial radio stations, so it is easily located and draws listeners from outside the specific demographic it is designed for. It also has a significantly powerful signal that allows it to broadcast to areas outside Canberra.

Many illnesses prevent a person from easily reading the printed page, including by making it impossible for them to turn pages or hold and manipulate books, newspapers and magazines properly. Some people may only need the services of 1RPH for a short time. For others, it is their only way of learning what is in the news and making news.

The choice of program is wide. The program includes readings from daily newspapers, magazines and books; themed programs on topics such as books, music, gardening, religion, current affairs, health, science, computers and travel; program time for others who provide services of interest to the print handicapped, including blindness organisations, the ACT library service, the ACT MS society, the Council on the Ageing, the RSPCA, heraldry and genealogy organisations, and war veterans; and Christian programs which cover a wide range of publications from a variety of Christian churches. It also provides the BBC World Service.

The quality of 1RPH's work is such that in 2008 it was awarded the community media of the year award by the Public Relations Institute of Australia. In 2009 the service was extended to Wagga Wagga, and in 2012 a further development was delivery of its services to people in the Junee area.

I find the government's arguments—Dr Bourke has touched upon a number of those arguments—against continuing support for such a worthy organisation somewhat troubling, especially when you consider some of the priorities that this government has and where it puts significant amounts of money. We all know that governments have to make tough choices, and that not every worthwhile activity can be supported. But if we look at the priorities that exist here in Canberra, we will see that it is very important that 1RPH be supported.

It is indefensible to deny any funding to 1RPH—we are talking, at best, as Mrs Dunne has mentioned, of funding around the \$38,000 mark—while at the same time we have given many hundreds of thousands of dollars to a sporting group whose players number in their hundreds at their most ambitious count. Of course, I refer to the Chief Minister's peculiar fascination with and support for beach volleyball. That is, frankly, indefensible when we look at where the priorities of this government should lie and the number of people involved. A number of our colleagues on the other side talk about disadvantage; they talk about people with disability; they talk about people who really need our help. Over \$500,000 has gone to a sport that has roughly 120 people. When we compare that to what we are talking about in relation to this motion that Mrs Dunne has brought before us, I cannot help wondering whether this particular group in our society is just unlucky when it comes to support from the Chief Minister.

Only a few short years ago, when the Chief Minister was education minister, he attempted to cancel support for teachers of the hearing impaired and the sight impaired. It was only when the Canberra Liberals highlighted the appalling unfairness of that decision that eventually the decision was reversed. Once again the Canberra Liberals are forced to highlight this mean-spirited action of the same minister, now Chief Minister and Treasurer. We can only hope that Mr Barr has a close look at what the priorities for this government of his should be and reverses this decision.

We see over half a million dollars go to recreational sport for sand courts that will benefit less than half a per cent of Canberrans. I think that even that is being generous in relation to the percentage we are talking about. We see spending of \$780 million on a tram that will benefit one per cent of Canberrans. Yet this service, which is asking for less than \$40,000 but is used by 10 per cent of Canberrans, does not make economic sense and is not good policy for this government—for Mr Barr or for Dr Bourke as the new minister in charge of this area.

I trust that this unintended consequence of the NDIS rollout is just that—unintended—and that the government will understand and appreciate the valuable service that 1RPH provides not only to our vision impaired but also to others with mobility issues, to our migrant community who struggle to read material in English, and to those in short-term poor health who want to keep up with local news.

I take this opportunity to thank all of those who have given great service to this organisation. There are a great number of them. It is also appropriate that, in the week he is celebrating a milestone birthday, I recognise the work of Robert Altamore, a great vision impaired advocate, for his commitment to this organisation.

I urge the government to see reason, show compassion and heart, and support this very worthwhile organisation in our community.

Question put:

That **Dr Bourke's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

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

Noes 8

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

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

MRS DUNNE (4.15): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am disappointed that one of Canberra's really important community services could not be supported in this place by the majority of members in the Assembly. As a colleague has just said to me, you

wonder where the government's priorities are when they can spend \$700 million on a tram, but not manage to find less than \$40,000 for an organisation that provides services to the blind and other people with reading impairment. It says a great deal about where the government's priorities are. They are not where the opposition's priorities are. The opposition is about providing services to people in the community; this government is about providing a tram for Mr Corbell and Mr Rattenbury's legacies. We are not about legacy issues; we are about services.

It is interesting to see the list of programs—again, Dr Bourke referred to it—that are receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars of assistance under the ILC tier 2 program of the national disability insurance scheme. These are organisations that have been asked to change their model. There are many other organisations that have been asked to change their service model. For some organisations, that is possible.

As I have said, Radio Print Handicapped were given undertakings and assurances that their funding would be safe. That has not turned out to be the case. In addition to that, they are now being told—an organisation that provides a radio reading service, that runs a radio station—to change their model to provide services for an individual. And that is for want of \$40,000, probably much less than is going to be spent by Mr Gentleman on his trip to Vancouver and the United States. For the people of Radio Print Handicapped, their future is going to be in jeopardy.

It shows the poor priorities of the members of this Assembly. It is with great disappointment that I will be reporting back to Radio Print Handicapped that the Labor Party and the Greens would not see their way clear to find \$38,000 for the continued funding of their organisation.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Multicultural communities

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.18): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the important contribution made to Canberra by people of different ethnicities, faiths and cultures;
- (b) the need for Canberra to continue to be a culturally inclusive and a welcoming city, and to continue to support freedom of expression for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities;
- (c) non-partisan history of support for our multicultural community; and
- (d) the need to support the CALD community to have full access to the benefits of our city;

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) assess the adequacy of the accommodation provided at the Theo Notaras building for multicultural groups;
 - (b) assess the funding levels and support available for groups serving the multicultural community, and the effectiveness of such funding in removing barriers to access equality of opportunity to CALD community members; and
 - (c) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day in May; and
- (3) pledges on-going support for people of all ethnicities, faiths and cultures.

I am pleased to stand today as the shadow minister for multicultural affairs and speak to this motion regarding the importance of multiculturalism to our city. The motion asks that the Assembly note the important contribution made to Canberra by people of different ethnicities, faiths and cultures; the need for Canberra to continue to be culturally inclusive and a welcoming city; the need to continue to support freedom of expression for speech for CALD communities; the non-partisan history of support for our multicultural community; and the need to support CALD communities to have full access to the benefits of our city.

It calls on the government to assess the adequacy of the accommodation provided at the Theo Notaras building for multicultural groups; the funding levels of support available for groups serving in the multicultural community; the effectiveness of such funding in removing barriers to access equality of opportunity to CALD community members; to report back to the Assembly before the end of this Assembly; and that the Assembly pledges ongoing support to people of all ethnicities, faiths and cultures.

This weekend the ACT government hosts the great Multicultural Festival started by Kate Carnell when she was Chief Minister and the Liberals were in government and very strongly continued under the ALP government. Multiculturalism and the benefits of multiculturalism to our city and our nation are all around us, be it the 101,965 ACT residents who were born in another country, the 22 per cent of Canberrans who speak a language other than English at home, or the many foreign embassies that we are so lucky to host here in our capital. We are so fortunate to see many cultures, faiths and ethnicities so clearly on a daily basis. It has also been a productive part of our society. People have been putting their hands to the task as new Australians and new Canberrans and multigenerational and multicultural families of building the successful community that we are in so many ways today.

Ethnicity, faith and multiculturalism were apparent before Canberra even existed. In 1841 the foundation stone was laid for St John's Church in Reid and it was consecrated on 12 March 1845. Next month marks 171 years since it was consecrated. St John's is a foundation of Canberra, and its strength and longevity are testament to the non-partisan history of support for faith and cultural groups in the Canberra region.

Even before the foundation stone was laid for St John's, the Ngunnawal people, the Wiradjuri people, the Gundangara people and the Ngarigo people all celebrated and practised their own unique culture in our area. We must ensure that we continue to encourage and appreciate their cultural practices and acknowledge their massive contribution to the original fabric of our city.

My motion seeks to better acknowledge, appreciate and understand how multiculturalism and how people from many different cultures can add to and improve us as a city, a territory and a nation. I see there are two broad ways to expand and encourage our existing cultures here in Canberra as well as to welcome new cultural groups into our city. There is government-led policy and initiative being implemented all around Australia, such as English language classes for new migrants and arrivals and the sponsorship of multicultural events.

By providing English language classes, the government can open the door for new citizens, allowing them to function smoothly in our society and to access the benefits that Canberra has to offer. And by the government sponsoring multicultural events, such as this weekend's festival in Canberra city, these old and new cultures are able to open a door for all Canberrans to see and know something about the wonderful and positive aspects of many people's cultures.

The other government-led policies and initiatives in the multicultural space include grants for cultural associations to assist them staying strong and functional. By granting such cultural associations these funds, we as a society acknowledge the hard and often selfless work they put in for their communities and for the broader community each and every day and hopefully growing their capacity to do so. These grants can also help connect the representatives of existing or older cultural associations with the newer ones. This approach is important in maintaining the strength and success of our strong multicultural approach and understanding here in the ACT. However, it is not the only approach that can or should be taken.

An equally important element of our multicultural success is the community-led approach. The community-led approach is when we have neighbour-to-neighbour support and friendship built at the suburban level, both through members of longer standing multigenerational presence in our nation to newer arrivals. This approach is about every Canberran reaching out to those who might be different or new. The community-led approach is a practical way to bring new or long-established ethnicities, faiths and cultures into harmony around a common humanity.

This is not the first time I have told the chamber about my grandfather's neighbour. When my grandfather in the 1950s bought his first house for his young family who arrived soon afterwards from Italy, he was a new Australian with limited English. He had an older gentleman next door called Mr Davies. Mr Davies was aware that my grandfather—my Nonno Giuseppe—had an old roof that was in danger of rust. Mr Davies leaned over the fence one day and said, "Joe, your roof needs painting and we're going to paint it together." Mr Davies was at the time in his 70s and my Nonno said to him, "I don't have the money to pay for that now, Joe." Joe said, "We'll paint your roof and you can pay me back later." So the next weekend Mr Davies turned up at the front door with paint, brushes and a ladder and they painted my grandpa's roof.

These actions so moved my grandfather that it is still a part of our family story today. Mr Davies is a part of my Italian cultural side; he is a part of our family story of arrival here. Nonno and Mr Davies remained friends, and when Mr Davies became frail he gave my Nonno one of his prized possessions—his rifle, which Nonno owned

with huge pride and cleaned often, although I do not think he ever used it. It meant a huge amount to my grandfather that he was valued by Mr Davies, and such actions are truly transformative. You do not even have to have a common language; people understand the international language of a home-baked cake or a cup of tea. It might sound minor but it actually is not; it can be life changing.

Today, in light of the Multicultural Festival, I again implore Canberrans to realise you hold so much power in your hands to value the culturally diverse Australians who live near you, to make an effort to reach out and say to newer migrants in your ambit or living in your street, "Hello. How are you going?" I think this story is indicative of the community-led approach which is responsible for so much of the success in our multiple cultures here in the ACT and in our country in general.

Another example of how this approach can be a success is through ClubsACT. There are nine ethnic clubs here in Canberra. ACT community clubs support over 1,000 community groups across Canberra every year, including over 50 cultural and religious groups. ClubsACT plays a strong role in providing inclusive social environments for people in our community. They grow our city's vibrant social, cultural and economic fabric in addition to supporting over 50 cultural and religious groups. By supporting these different clubs and cultural groups this organisation demonstrates a community-led approach to multiculturalism.

It is also vital for the government-led approach to multiculturalism to be just as successful as the community-led approach. Therefore, I call on the ACT government to assess the adequacy of the accommodation provided by government at the Theo Notaras building for multicultural groups. Theo, as it is commonly known, is a much-used facility, but with the changes to the Assembly building I fear conditions over there are not improving and it might become more cramped.

As I have already mentioned, the sponsorship of multicultural events in the ACT is a key ingredient to achieving success in the multicultural space and is a tool used by different cultures to educate the public about their different cultural beliefs and practices through small groups, events and meetings as well as the big showcase of the Multicultural Festival. I also call on the ACT government to assess funding levels and support available for groups serving the multicultural community and the effectiveness of such funding in removing barriers to access of equality of opportunity to culturally and linguistically diverse community members. If our investment is not removing barriers, perhaps that should be measured for future harmony.

If these community members are not given equality of opportunity, they cannot truly function in the multicultural society because it should not take two generations for a new Australian and new Canberran to be able to reap the benefits of the new country and city they have joined. This is especially vital for women who are often isolated from English speakers while working in the home as wives and mums in the first generation after arriving. I ask that the ACT government assess these areas and report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day in May.

Finally, I call on the ACT government to acknowledge that there are many different people in Canberra with different ethnicities, faiths and cultures. I call on the government to acknowledge that the success of these different groups relies heavily

on freedom—freedom for them to believe what they believe; freedom for them to pray how they pray and where they pray; and freedom for them to speak what they believe and how they believe they should be able to speak. Different cultures have very different beliefs and unless we acknowledge these different beliefs, we cannot be a successful multicultural society.

Multiculturalism at its best is about the freedom of citizens to be who they are. It is easy to support multiculturalism and our many faiths when we are celebrating ethnic food, dance and the other wonderful sides of these cultural experiences. But the real test is when we are left feeling uncomfortable by the different views we hold. Sometimes difference makes us uncomfortable, and that is okay. Here in Canberra we are blessed with some people who are passionate about their beliefs and cultures. They care so much that they are willing to put themselves in the public domain and the public debate for those beliefs, and we should applaud them and make sure the door is open for them.

As our VC winner Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith said in his Anzac Day address last year, freedom is not free. Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith understands this sentiment. He has put his body and soul on the line to defend our nation from those who would want us to be afraid in our own homes and our own city. If government tries to force us into a false peace by stopping us from being who we are, by stopping disagreement or difference or protest, then we are denying some of the freedom that our vulnerable servicemen and women have sacrificed their lives for.

Freedom is not free and we have to realise that we are all gloriously different and that that is a good thing. If we continue down this track, which is becoming evident in some government actions around the country, of forcing sameness on people and not being allowed to offend or truly debate, we will end up in a distinctly oppressive place. We have seen it in history too many times.

In conclusion, I thank all who are involved in working this weekend to produce the multicultural showcase of the Multicultural Festival. I thank Minister Berry for all that she has, no doubt, put in. I expect it will be another good year and another experience of building up the ties between our community groups and members. I look forward to hearing the views of others in this positive debate.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Multicultural and Youth Affairs, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (4.30): After all of the other different debates that we have had in this Assembly today, it looks like Mrs Jones and I will be in mad agreement on the actual issue that she has brought to the chamber for discussion today, so I thank her for that.

As we all agree, Canberra is a great multicultural community. I was lucky enough to be able to experience that a couple of times over the past week when I was out with Dr Bourke celebrating and joining in a smoking ceremony with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the elected body. We were joined by the Sri Lankan Buddhists who will be the neighbours of the housing units for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to age in place. It was really lovely to see that diversity and that connection between those two very different communities.

Early this week out at St John's, people were gathering to call on the federal government to provide a welcome and let the refugees—the children and families who are being forced back to Nauru and Manus Island—stay and were offering sanctuary for those families. It was really lovely to join them in that call as well. That was a really good example for me, and we see it every day, everywhere we go—in our schools, in our shopping centres and in our workplaces.

Canberra has been a community where people going about their lives actively work to make sure that other people feel welcome, that they feel valued, where their difference is respected and where they get to experience equality. We see this from the diversity that thrives in our workplaces, our schools and our sporting clubs. We see this from refugees living amongst us who have called Canberra home for longer than I have been alive. We saw this last year when over 260,000 of us enjoyed the hundreds of stalls and events that made for a successful Multicultural Festival, and we will see it again this weekend at the festival's 20th celebration.

The benefits of our community making Canberra a truly inclusive and welcoming space are enormous and, as a community, we all need to take responsibility for making inclusion a real thing. When we talk about inclusion in Canberra, we are referring to the inclusion of residents from nearly 200 different countries, with over a quarter of Canberra's total population born overseas. The value and joy that cultural diversity brings to our lives is eclipsed only by a collective pride in the contributions our new friends, neighbours and colleagues make to the strength and vigour of Canberra's social, cultural and economic life, that is, we are proud not only of our collective diversity; we are proud of the individual parts and achievements that make this diversity.

There is no better example of this than our official declaration of Canberra as a refugee welcome zone, the first, sadly, but hopefully not the last state or territory jurisdiction to do so. The ACT government did not do this alone. We were able to make this declaration with the support of a vast number of community groups who now call Canberra home. Our declaration builds on many existing government initiatives to support an inclusive community by providing accessible and responsible services for all Canberrans.

At the core of the government's current strategy to promote harmony and nurture an environment where we can share knowledge of the various cultural traditions practised in Canberra is the One Canberra Reference Group report which contains a number of practical initiatives drawn from the One Canberra symposium

Members may recall that the One Canberra symposium held on 30 October 2014 followed several meetings held between the then ACT Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Joy Burch, and local faith leaders. The symposium was organised to speak with community leaders about what we could do to strengthen our social cohesion and how we could gain a better understanding of other faiths and cultures in our community by building closer links with the people who practise those faiths and cultures.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the implementation of many of the recommended actions has commenced and in a number of cases has already been completed. This includes the Islamic centres around Canberra who now open their doors to the community each year as part of Ramadan observations locally and nationally. These types of events are not new to our community. However, more opportunities being provided for interfaith interaction are certainly encouraged right across our city. We invite the broader community to participate and to gain an understanding of other faiths and cultures and, more importantly, the people who practise those faiths and cultures.

The ACT government plays an important role in providing services to support and assist refugees and asylum seekers and culturally and linguistically diverse communities to settle in our city. Again, we do not do this on our own. We are proud of those organisations and leaders in our community who share our passion and commitment to help every person reach their full potential. Through our work, we are showing that we stand for unity and inclusion. There is no better physical embodiment of our work than the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre which stands in the heart of our city.

The Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre was officially opened in 2005. Since then it has served a significant number of ACT multicultural groups as a venue for a variety of functions, including cultural celebrations, religious purposes, multicultural art exhibitions, citizenship ceremonies and multicultural cooking classes. If anyone has been over to the multicultural centre in the past couple of months they would have seen those beautiful red curtains which were made by a multicultural sewing group, which was put together by the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services out at their hub in Wanniasa. It is great to see a group of mostly women coming together from all different backgrounds and nationalities to put together those beautiful curtains which we now get to enjoy during all these different celebrations over at the multicultural centre.

The government acknowledges that particular multicultural communities have had a significant increase in their numbers over the past decade, and the centre's resources continue to accommodate this growing need. There are certain multicultural groups that conduct meetings that involve numbers of members that go beyond the capacity of the centre. In these circumstances these groups have been assisted to identify other venues that could be suitable to meet their needs. The government is pleased to advise the Assembly that since 2005 we have been able to accommodate many multicultural community tenants and several peak multicultural groups in the building. These groups are assisted with a community rent subsidy, providing them with office space in the city precinct with full access to all facilities and amenities within the centre at no extra cost. All multicultural groups serving the multicultural community have access to the ACT government's grants programs and other funding initiatives which are also available to the ACT community more broadly.

In relation to other support for multicultural community groups, I advise the Assembly that the ACT government provides a number of specific grants that advance the interests of local multicultural communities. These include the participation—

seniors—grants program, the participation—multicultural—grants program, the community language schools grants program and the community support and infrastructure grants program.

In relation to reporting back to the Assembly on this matter, I will happily do so. Mrs Jones would know that I have recently provided her with some information about the implementation of the One Canberra Reference Group report, which I will expand on and share with all members of the Assembly.

Once again, I thank Mrs Jones for this motion, which we will be supporting today, and thank Canberrans for being part of a community who take each other as we are, where our differences are respected and celebrated, and where we say “welcome”, regardless of our different backgrounds. We are a government that is committed to ensuring that this work continues through protective laws, enabling policies, and community connectedness because we recognise the contribution each person makes to the strength, harmony and vigour of Canberra’s social, cultural and economic life and that it is important to our city’s strength.

We will continue to support refugees and migrants and linguistically and culturally diverse Canberrans to celebrate our differences and to acknowledge that these differences are awesome and they are what makes our community strong. It is what contributes to make Canberra a national leader in social inclusion and equality. The government will be supporting the motion.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.40): I am happy to be supporting the motion today and I thank Mrs Jones for bringing it forward. Canberra is an inclusive and welcoming city with a rich and diverse society made up of people from many different ethnicities, faiths and cultures. Our country is the wonderful place that it is because of the richness of our cultural fabric and the great contribution of people from all different backgrounds who have made Australia their home.

The ACT Greens believe that cultural and linguistic diversity greatly enriches our community and should not just be accepted but also celebrated and encouraged. This weekend, of course, will be a wonderful demonstration of this as we come together to celebrate our diversity at the National Multicultural Festival. Right on cue, the weather is going to be baking hot this weekend, as it always seems to be for the festival. I am sure that people will have a great time out there and I hope everyone does so safely.

As a community and as a government, the ACT has welcomed newly arrived refugees, people who are fleeing persecution and war and seeking safety for themselves and their families in a new country. I only wish that our federal government had the same generosity of spirit. It is disappointing that it has been left to the state and territory governments to show leadership and offer to give refuge to the 267 asylum seekers currently slated for deportation to the hellhole of Nauru, including many innocent babies and young children. I echo the calls of my federal colleagues and urge the Prime Minister to do the right thing when it comes to these very vulnerable people and let them stay in Australia. Our community welcomes them.

Of course, newly arrived migrants and refugees need support to settle into our community. There are many barriers that people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds face on an ongoing basis when it comes to accessing services and connecting with the community. It goes without saying that the ACT government has an important role in supporting multicultural communities so that they can have full access to the benefits of our city.

I know that the Theo Notaras centre is a focal point for multicultural communities and that some groups have their offices based there, as well as being the home for service providers such as MARSS and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. I have certainly been to many events over the years in the function room there, be they community celebrations, various festival celebrations or even the granting of citizenship. It really is a good facility and it should be a great resource for the community to meet and hold community events.

I support the calls in this motion for the government to assess the adequacy of the accommodation for the multicultural community at the Theo Notaras centre, as well as the funding levels and support available for multicultural groups more broadly. I look forward to the government response on these questions if we have an opportunity in the Assembly to reflect on that information and move forward from there to make sure that we are providing the right level of support to these various communities and groups who are reliant on that level of government support.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (4.43), in reply: In conclusion, I thank all parties in the Assembly for their support of the motion and the minister for being willing to come back to the Assembly with some more information for us about their assessment on the adequacy of support to our multicultural groups. I also conclude by reminding the Assembly of my statements about freedom. Freedom is not free; it takes active effort. I congratulate those who have been part of the active effort to allow freedom and freedom of debate in this country in the past and I hope it will continue into the future.

Different religious groups and ethnic groups will bring very different attitudes and very different ideas to the table. I hope we will see a good array of ethnicity standing in this year's election too. I am sure we will, because Canberra is so full of different communities that we celebrate.

I urge the minister also to remember my constant banging on about women learning English because we hear so often about relationships in these communities that have broken down and women who are isolated from services and access to services. Again, something that plays on my mind a great deal is the amount of child care that is available for women to go to the ACT-led English courses that we offer. These are representations that I will continue to make to the federal government about how we can better allow women to take their children with them so that they are able to learn English from an early stage after their arrival in Australia and Canberra. And that is not to forget that there are older Canberrans who have never really learnt the language very well. We have all met them while doorknocking. Those people live a life that perhaps does not have as much activity or access to as many groups as it could because of their English skills.

Any moves in the direction of increasing or freeing up more places for women to attend those courses I really support. I remember as a child watching *Playschool* with my grandmother. We used to walk to the shop and buy yoghurt, which was our big treat. Sitting at the 1970s-style marble table with her in the dining room watching *Playschool* she would say, “Giulia, we watch *Playschool* because it is good for my English.” I remember being really taken by the fact that she was an older lady who was still trying to learn better and more English. What a great example for younger women that we do not give up on learning and we do not give up on trying to improve ourselves as our lives go on.

I thank the Assembly for the support. In conclusion, I look forward to this weekend’s events. I look forward to seeing the minister there, I am sure.

Motion agreed to.

Tuggeranong—ambient odours

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.46): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) a significant number of Tuggeranong residents have reported a foul smell in December 2015 and January 2016;
- (b) the Environment Protection Authority have been investigating the smell and as yet, have not been able to determine its cause;
- (c) the smell is impacting on residents in Tuggeranong, including their enjoyment of outdoor spaces;
- (d) the ACT government is not communicating openly with Tuggeranong residents about the smell, and what the government is doing to determine its cause; and
- (e) one of the ACT government’s strategic and operational priorities in the 2015-2016 Budget was “expanding the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre to ensure ongoing landfill capacity and continuing the bulky waste collection service”; and

(2) calls on the ACT government to:

- (a) immediately conduct a minimum of two field-based ambient odour intensity assessment surveys, one in February 2016 and one in March 2016, to observe downwind odour intensity and frequency in and around discrete receptor locations in Tuggeranong;
- (b) process the data from each field-based ambient odour intensity assessment survey and tabulate statistical data comparing the frequency and intensity of odours observed at each survey location in Tuggeranong;

- (c) communicate openly with Tuggeranong residents about the smell, and what the ACT government is doing to determine its cause;
- (d) address and stop the smell;
- (e) take the appropriate action to ensure that the smell does not recur; and
- (f) report back to the Assembly in March 2016 on progress.

Over the past few months I have had a significant number of residents in the Tuggeranong area report a foul smell in their suburb. It started in December, continued through January, and again this month. As recently as this morning, I have received more emails about the smell. I forwarded to the Environment Protection Authority the locations of the smell as constituents have reported them to me, because it is important that we are able to identify the source of the odour. The Environment Protection Agency to my knowledge has been investigating the smell, and as far as I know, has not been able to determine its cause.

This foul smell is impacting on Tuggeranong residents, in particular when they are trying to enjoy outdoor spaces. Some examples have been provided to me: having a barbecue in their backyard, having people over for dinner and sitting out on the deck or doing the gardening. Some people have said that they are unable to have their windows open. Of course, over the summer period, that is quite problematic for people.

Back in December, I created an interactive map using Google Maps to show the location of where the smells have been identified to try to track where the odour can be identified. Constituents have been pleased to see this map. They can see from that that it is mostly over the hill from the tip in the Fadden and Macarthur area.

But it can go more widely than that. It can be Gowrie, Wanniasa and Gilmore. It is often near the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, near Long Gully Road and towards the Mugga Lane tip. Many constituents have specifically said that they believe the smell is coming from the tip. I have had many emails from people talking about their experiences and why they believe the smell is coming from the tip. They have said it is often worse in the early mornings and then later in the evenings.

The residents of Tuggeranong want answers. They want to know exactly where the smell is coming from. Is it something that is going to happen over and over again? Is it a temporary odour related to works at the tip? People in this place may recall that a year ago in December 2014 and January 2015, we had a similar outbreak of reports of a smell from the tip. In that instance, we were advised it was due to work occurring at the tip.

Residents are very happy to accept that there can be work of a one-off or intermittent nature. Most residents understood the tip would close. People who bought homes 20 years ago understood that the tip was slated to close in 2015 or 2016. Instead, it has now tripled in size. Residents want to know if this is something that is going to happen to them on an ongoing basis.

I would like to read just a few of the comments I have received from residents. I start with this one:

I agree with the resident in Fadden. It has to be the tip. There is no other explanation.

Thanks for the email, Nicole. We have had tip smells at least one day recently.

Hi, Nicole. It is always smelling on and off. People have probably just decided to put up with it, given the current government attitude towards doing anything useful for the Tuggeranong community. Just because you might not get regular complaints from people may not be due to the stink having abated.

We have been smelling it on a fairly regular basis, so it must be impacting the school. I have noticed it early mornings and in the evenings. When it is there, it is not pleasant. I do hope a resolution can be found for this problem.

We constantly suffer from sore eyes and throats here. We went walking just after 11 last night and got a whiff of the landfill garbage on Nicklin Crescent just below our place.

I read the article in the *Canberra Times* last weekend, and I support what this couple were saying about the continued smell from the tip. It concerns me as a long-time resident at Fadden that this is going to be an ongoing issue, particularly in light of the Mugga Lane tip's life being extended.

The smell has been a problem again on and off for the last five days. I think we only notice it when the wind blows from the east. I am glad you are on to this. It must have a dramatic impact on property values in Fadden at the moment.

I was very disappointed to read last weekend's *Canberra Times* article on this issue and the claims by the ACT government officials that there was no evidence of odour coming from the Mugga Lane tip site. This is completely at odds with our experience over many months. Their so-called sniff test would be laughable if it were not for the impact of it failing the residents they are supposed to serve, and whose taxes pay them. I was also unaware of the proposal to expand the tip site and the opportunity to make public comments, and if I had, I would have lodged a submission arguing against expansion without improved and more rigorous permit conditions to control odour as well as the pests attracted to the tip, such as crows, and for independent testing and verification of these permit conditions. Tip operators should not be left to regulate themselves. Regulators promising to only explore alternative testing methods after the event and after permits have been issued and conditions imposed is as equally pointless.

I have just reported to Access Canberra the smell tonight from the tip. It is 5.20 pm. I live in Fadden Hills, and you could not mistake that smell. I also told the person that my husband was recently talking to someone who said they would be interested in moving to Fadden, but were unsure now because of news of the smell.

Some more:

As reported in the *Canberra Times* over the weekend, there have apparently been investigations regarding the smell being sewerage. It definitely is not sewerage and is the same smell as last year, quite different to a sewerage smell. We are adamant the smell is coming from the tip. We continue to keep a diary of when we notice it, although we are away from home a lot. One of our adult children did tell us they smelled it terribly on Saturday morning at around 8 am. We have had incidences in the past when we have not been able to go outside, which was around the last time the issue was looked at several months ago.

The smell from the tip is back tonight. Anything you can do to assist with this ongoing issue is much-appreciated. The map is a great idea. Thank you for your support.

This morning at 7.30 am the smell is dreadful. I doubt if anyone else will report it. Most of my neighbours are away on holidays.

It is very bad this evening. The guests we had for dinner said they did not want to say anything, but it was very noticeable. Quite embarrassing.

My experience last year was that it is very difficult to find the correct person to complain to, and they all acted very surprised and as if I was the only complainant. We suffered without answers last summer, and it appears we will be subjected to the similar again this year, until you intervened. We have noticed a significant odour both this morning and yesterday morning. It seems to be more prevalent when we have a north-east prevailing breeze. I have been taking green rubbish to the Mugga Lane tip and experienced the same odour while there, so I wonder if the odour is coming from the tip. Thank you for your help.

We are aware of sporadic ongoing issues with the smell from the tip, especially after rain or with particular wind directions. We hoped we were having some progress, so it is disappointing to hear that little has been able to be achieved at this point.

I can report an odour I noticed when I returned home today. It was a sour, acidic odour not unlike vomit. It was quite strong at 4 pm. I could not say what time it started, but it seemed to reduce significantly by 5 pm.

Just letting you know the stench is present this morning, moderately strong but nauseating enough. Definitely a tip smell, not sewerage.

Early this morning the odour in Fadden area was overwhelming. A light north-east breeze was blowing. Please continue to raise this issue with the authorities responsible.

Et cetera; so this is not a one-off issue. It is not a sewerage issue, as originally the government tried to point to. Icon Water sent out a truck to investigate the initial complaints from Nicklin Place in Fadden Hills and quite quickly determined that it was not a sewerage smell. The government could just come clean and say exactly where they believe the smell is coming from. The residents of Tuggeranong do not want much. They just want an answer to their question. They want to know what, if anything, the EPA has found from its investigation into the smell.

Is the tip operator taking sufficient steps to minimise the smell? Why cannot the ACT government take action to stop the smell? There was some comment earlier in January that maybe the operator at the tip may be putting in drainage piping and whether that was exposing some of the tip face. The question some residents asked is, “Why would you do that at the hottest time of the year, the time of year when many residents are on holidays and trying to enjoy outdoor spaces?” These are the types of questions that residents in Tuggeranong have and that they want the ACT government to answer.

They are the people that have the right to enjoy their outdoor spaces without any foul smell that, to date, the ACT government does not seem to care about, have a clue how to find out what it is or have a clue how to get rid of it. Is it really that difficult to communicate openly with local residents about an issue that is affecting them and their families for two years in a row? What public consultation, if any, has the government conducted in relation to its planned expansion of the Mugga Lane tip?

One Tuggeranong resident mentioned that if they had known about the planned expansion they would have put in a written submission. But my question is: how did the government conduct public consultation on the tip expansion? It is just another example of this government’s poor communication with everyday Canberrans. These preceding comments are made on the basis that these residents believe the smell is coming from the tip. If it is not coming from the tip, where is it coming from? It should be the government’s responsibility to answer those questions.

The motion today calls on the ACT government to take action on this issue, not just brush it aside. More recently, when we have passed on comments from residents about the smell—for example, a resident may have said, “I smelt it at 7.30 this morning at my place”—what appears to be happening is that some time during the course of the business day the EPA go to that area and say they cannot find a smell, which is not surprising given the way that odours can move.

We all know the difficulty in identifying odours and that they move in mysterious ways, if you like. Not many people at all, except at the very height of the problem, have said that the smell is there during the middle of the business day. What they have said is that it is there at 6.30, 7.30 and up to 8.30 in the morning and again in the evening. I am not an expert in this but potentially sending the EPA there during the course of a normal business day is probably never going to identify that the odour is present, because it is not what residents are reporting. Just because it might suit the EPA to go there during the day does not mean that they are going to be able to identify the smell.

You can see from the interactive map that I have created the range of locations where the smell has been identified. You can see that it is generally over the ridge from the tip. We are not talking about something immediately next door; it is a couple of kilometres away. People who bought in that area would never have expected the smell from the tip to reach their homes. Heaven only knows what it might be like to have a cemetery on the other side of the hill closer to the tip. Imagine going to visit your dearly departed and being hit with a smell like that. It just does not bear thinking about.

We are not only calling on the government to identify the cause of the smell but we are proposing some solutions of what they may do; an action plan of what they may do. That includes conducting field-based, ambient odour intensity assessment surveys—one during February and one in March—to observe the downwind odour intensity and frequency in and around discrete receptor locations in Tuggeranong, then process the data from those surveys, comparing the frequency and intensity of odours observed at each survey location in Tuggeranong, and then communicate openly with Tuggeranong residents, not pretend there is no smell, not say, “You live next to a tip; you have got to expect that,” because that is not right. It is not right to expect people to put up with a smell like that from a tip which is kilometres away. Again, if it is not the tip, where is it coming from and what are we going to do to stop it?

The government needs to take appropriate action to ensure the smell does not reoccur. We have asked it to report back to the Assembly in March 2016 on the progress. I urge the government to find the cause of the smell and stop the stench continuing to impact on Tuggeranong residents. I urge all members here—not only those in the Brindabella electorate but especially those members—to support this motion today.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo—Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, Minister for Transport and Municipal Services and Assistant Minister for Health) (5.01): I thank Ms Lawder for her motion today, and I would like to reassure Ms Lawder that I have been taking this matter seriously. Last Friday I visited Mugga Lane, Fadden and Macarthur to receive a briefing from the officials from the EPA and from TAMS about the situation and to see for myself the efforts they are undertaking to resolve this. I am happy to extend to other members of the Legislative Assembly a similar briefing and the opportunity to join me at the Mugga Lane facility to get a better understanding of this issue. It is an important issue, and I would like to thank Mr Gentlemen and Ms Burch for also bringing this matter to my attention. They are both terrific advocates for the Tuggeranong community. Of course, I would like to thank the affected residents who have raised the matter, and I hope we can get to the bottom of it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as it has turned out, this matter is a complex one, and I will be moving an amendment today to reflect some of this complexity. While there is no doubt there is an odour which is affecting some residents of Macarthur and Fadden, it has not been easy to find its source, despite extensive efforts of both ACT NOWaste and Access Canberra. For example, in many cases the odour complaints have occurred when the prevailing wind was coming from a direction other than the landfill. If the landfill was the source of the odour, it could be expected there would be high levels of complaints from businesses in Hume during prevailing westerly winds; however, this has not been the case.

To continue the investigation into the source of the odour, the Environment Protection Authority and ACT NOWaste are engaging with affected residents. Local residents have been asked to maintain diaries so that the EPA can better determine the cause of the odour and when it is most prevalent. Further, the Mugga Lane landfill and other potential sources of the odour at the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre have

been the subject of numerous site visits since June 2015. Since the beginning of December 2015 EPA officers have visited Mugga Lane on 14, 15, 23 and 24 December 2015 and again on 11 January 2016 following further complaints. I also understand ACT NOWaste officers have inspected the Mugga Lane site on 5, 16, 19 and 24 November; 7, 10 and 21 December; and 7 and 14 January. NOWaste has confirmed that on none of these visits were odour levels abnormal.

An officer from capital works also visited the site and surrounding suburbs on 4 and 5 January 2016 and reported that no odour was present at the landfill boundary, with the exception of a slight organics odour at the front entrance on 5 January. Officers have also visited the surrounding residential areas on numerous occasions in relation to after-hours odour complaints, with the most recent visit being undertaken on the evening of 11 December 2015, with the EPA officer unable to smell a garbage-like odour. The visits reveal that the odour on the site has been at environmentally acceptable levels and the operators are complying with their responsibilities in respect of odour management.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I offer this information not to suggest there is no problem or that the investigation has concluded but simply to show how seriously the government is taking this matter and to highlight the level of investigation currently underway. While it has not been determined that the Mugga Lane landfill is the source of the odour, as a precautionary measure, the EPA has required the landfill operator to modify its method of temporary covering of the tipping face at the end of each day's operations.

It should also be noted that the Mugga Lane landfill has a relatively low ratio of putrescible waste to inert waste and, as such, is not considered odorous landfill by industry standards. The Mugga Lane landfill has been taking the ACT's waste since the 1970s. It is the territory's primary landfill and the only landfill able to receive putrescible waste or general solid waste. As such, it is an important asset for the ACT.

While many regions of Australia are battling with growing populations and waste management requirements, including suitable new landfill locations, this government took the responsible step in 2012 of acquiring additional land adjacent to the existing landfill to allow for future construction. In last year's budget the ACT government provided \$21 million for the construction of cell expansion at stage 5 at the Mugga Lane landfill, and this is in addition to the \$19.8 million provided for the first two landfill cells in stage 5.

I would like to reassure Ms Lawder and other members of the Assembly that as part of its commitment to improving the environmental management of the Mugga Lane landfill the EPA has also asked ACT NOWaste to undertake modelling to assess the potential odour impact of the planned future expansion of stage 5 as a condition in the development application for the construction of the next planned cells. NOWaste supports this approach, and will work closely with the authority to develop terms of reference for this work. These actions will ensure there is sufficient landfill capacity to receive the territory's waste, if required, for many decades into the future.

This government is committed to delivering safe and environmentally responsible recycling and waste management services to the ACT community. We have demonstrated this commitment over many years through ongoing investment and a wide range of high quality recycling and waste management facilities and services across the territory. Under this government, the ACT has achieved one of the highest levels of recycling of any jurisdiction in Australia. The ACT generates around 900,000 tonnes of waste each year, and over 70 per cent of this is reused for recycling or recycled.

Going further to some of the content of Ms Lawder's motion, and why I am moving an amendment to it, I note the motion calls upon the government to conduct field-based ambient odour intensity assessment surveys. I am advised that field-based ambient odour intensity assessment surveys are best suited to situations where the potential sources of odour have been identified. As such, given the situation at the moment, it is not the best test for these circumstances. Given that we do not yet know the source of the odour, the use of such a survey would be of little to no use at this stage. This approach may have merit, though, once further data collection and analysis of other information, such as odour diaries, is completed.

Madam Speaker, we remain committed to providing environmentally responsible waste and recycling services to the ACT community, and this includes ensuring that the Mugga Lane landfill continues to operate to a high environmental standard. The government does take the concerns of all residents seriously and we are committed to finding the source of this odour and resolving the matter.

I would encourage all members in this chamber to forward any complaints to my office, as the more data we have, the better chance there is of locating the source of this odour and resolving the issue. Again, I would be happy to provide an on-site briefing to those members who are interested. I thank the Assembly for discussing this matter today, and I move the amendment that is circulated in my name:

Omit all words after "notes that", substitute:

- “(a) a number of Tuggeranong residents have reported a foul smell in December 2015 and January 2016;
- (b) the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has been investigating the smell and, as yet, has not been able to determine its cause;
- (c) a number of possible sources are being investigated;
- (d) investigations of this kind can be difficult in isolating the source of the odour due to the subjective nature of the matter and the periodic occurrence; and
- (e) assistance from Tuggeranong residents in recording the times of any detected odours and their location is important in assisting the EPA in determining the source of the odour; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) work with affected residents in isolating the source of the odour;
- (b) communicate with affected residents on the ongoing investigation and any outcomes; and
- (c) report back to the Assembly on progress in April 2016.”.

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (5.08): Madam Speaker, I will speak briefly to this and I welcome the opportunity to respond to the motion here today. I, too, have heard about these concerns, at a recent mobile office where local residents were raising it with me. As the minister for TAMS has said, the government has been dealing with complaints from a number of residents in Macarthur and Fadden since June of last year. As I have said, it has been raised with me a number of times and as recently as the weekend before last.

The government, through its agencies, has engaged with the affected residents in order to identify the source of the odour. While the number of formal complaints it has received could be considered relatively low, it is a matter of concern. As we have heard Ms Lawder talk about today, and certainly as local residents have said to me, it is something of concern to our local community.

The Mugga Lane landfill and other potential sources of odour out at the resource management centre have been investigated, and various operators at Mugga Lane have been assisting the Environment Protection Authority with these investigations. It is pleasing to note that, while various operators are complying with their environmental approvals, some changes have been made as a precautionary measure.

As has been said, despite the extensive efforts of the EPA and ACT NOWaste, it has not been possible to determine the source of the odour. I note and appreciate the minister’s comment to continue to seek solutions to the problem. I am very pleased to hear her offer for people to forward complaints to her. That is the comment I will be making at mobile offices in the future when this matter is raised with me.

The action taken by the EPA to improve the environmental management of Mugga Lane landfill by requiring ACT NOWaste to undertake modelling to assess potential odour impact into the planned future expansion of stage 5 is a significant step. This is a serious matter for the affected residents, and it is important that we do not resort to a knee-jerk reaction that will only give false hope to affected residents. Rather, we must find the cause of the problem and have a final and absolute solution.

I would like to recognise the commitment to safe recycling processes, and the government is continuing to look for ways to reduce waste going into landfill. As the minister explained, the Mugga Lane tip is an important asset for the territory, and has been receiving the ACT’s waste since the 1970s. As well as being a cost-effective solution, the new landfill cells are planned, designed and constructed to the highest standards.

I support Ms Fitzharris’s amendment and I put on the record that this is a matter of concern to me and the community of Brindabella. I will continue to work with the

minister to find the cause of the problem and find a solution to remedy it so that the good folk of, particularly, Macarthur and Gowrie can enjoy the wonderful outdoors and the views that they can have.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (5.12): I will speak very briefly as Ms Fitzharris has covered the issue in quite some detail. As members will recall, I was formerly responsible for this in the territory and municipal services portfolio. I guess there have been two different phases to this. There was an incident last summer in which the tip face was deliberately opened up as part of reclaiming space in the tip. I know some residents had quite a strong experience from that, and that was an unfortunate but necessary piece of work in order to reclaim a significant amount of volume at the tip. That matter was resolved. At the time we apologised to those who experienced odours as a result of that piece of work.

These new complaints really started to loom up late last year. I simply want to echo the comments Ms Fitzharris made about the fact that the directorate has taken it very seriously. I think the challenge has been that, certainly at the beginning, the reports were very sporadic. There were very few reports, and there was a degree of difference in them that made it difficult to actually ascertain what the source of the odour might be. But I do know that the directorate has taken it seriously. Ms Fitzharris outlined the number of visits that have been made, the number of site inspections and the like, and I can certainly recall that they were trying hard but really struggling to find the answers. I am happy to support the amendment that has been brought forward by Ms Fitzharris today because I think it outlines the fact that the government is taking it seriously. The TAMS directorate, NOWaste and the EPA have all put considerable effort into this, and more residents now are starting to provide some support as well.

I welcome the offer Ms Fitzharris has made, because the more information that comes in the better. I hope we can resolve this. I think the very nature of the media reports of people reporting across different parts of Tuggeranong, reporting different types of smell, and there being different theories on where it is coming from underline the fact that this has been challenging. But hopefully we can get to the bottom of it soon and resolve this issue for people who are experiencing odour concerns. I will be supporting the amendment brought by Ms Fitzharris.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (5.14): I welcome Ms Burch's intervention. Ms Burch has finally had a mobile office and listened to a constituent. Some 15 months after Ms Lawder started campaigning to rid those parts of Tuggeranong of these foul smells, Ms Burch has joined in. Well done; I am very grateful that she is doing that.

It is interesting that the story seems to shift. Perhaps it is the case that once the odour was not from the tip. But the thing is that this has now been going on for some time. We are all entitled to the pleasant enjoyment, particularly during the summer months, of sitting outside and having a barbecue and having friends over, and there are parts of Tuggeranong now where that does not happen.

I remind members—and you would remember, Madam Speaker—that there was once a progressive government in this place that had a policy that said no waste by 2010 and that the tips would shut. Of course, that was not achieved because not so progressive Labor governments walked away from it. I think what this highlights is

that those in charge, those who should be offering leadership on issues such as better municipal management in this place, are failing and perhaps it is time to change government.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.15): To speak to the amendment and close, I reiterate that residents of Tuggeranong want answers. I appreciate the work the EPA and other agencies have done to date. Residents have not heard too much about that to date. They come to me saying that they smell the smell, they report the smell and they get nothing back. They want to know what the EPA has done about this issue. What have they found? Why does the smell keep coming back? What is causing the smell? Why can the ACT government not work out what is causing that smell? Why can the ACT government not stop the smell? If the cause of the smell is the tip, why not just come out and say that? If it is a specific incident, as Mr Rattenbury referred to a year ago, why not just say there is a specific program of works going on at the tip?

Mr Rattenbury: I did. We said that at the time.

MS LAWDER: That was a year ago; I am talking about the current incidents. If it is about putting in drainage piping, as someone has said, why would you do that over the December period?

I also wrote to the Chief Minister on this matter. I wrote a detailed list of questions—about a page and a half of questions—and I received a response from Mr Barr which I think was a bit dismissive. It was very disappointing that the Chief Minister did not seem to take this seriously or think it was an important issue. In response to my series of questions about the issue he wrote:

Landfill and composting facilities will, by their nature, always cause some odours. It is not possible to regulate such facilities to a zero odour level.

It was quite a dismissive response—dismissive of the concerns of Tuggeranong residents. He said also:

I would like to reassure you the ACT government takes its responsibility to preserve and protect our environment and air quality very seriously.

Really, Madam Speaker? What have we seen so far? What action have we seen apart from an investigation that seems to be relying heavily on information provided by my office and that seems to take place during standard working hours? What has the government been doing to identify the cause of the smell and, just as importantly, fix the problem?

The first time this went into the public arena in the *Canberra* Times in this current period before Christmas was through a resident in Fadden hills. He then later rang the EPA through Access Canberra, as I had asked him to do when he contacted me. Access Canberra would not put him through to the EPA, despite the fact that that is what the EPA had instructed me to tell people to do. Then there were other responses from the EPA saying they had not received any other complaints. If someone tries to call Access Canberra and is not put through, is it any wonder that there have not been any other complaints? It would make one question what the data collection process is like in the EPA. Once again, I passed that information back to the EPA to make sure they knew this was happening and to enable them to provide further instructions to

Access Canberra to make sure these complaints were being put through to the correct area.

A number of issues are at play here. I know there has been some work going on. According to Ms Fitzharris, EPA and other officials visited the tip about this issue starting back in November. November, December, January—now we are almost halfway through February. How much longer is it going to take? How many more reports do they need from residents to take this matter very, very seriously and do something to fix it? Residents are rightly outraged that nothing seems to be being done. Obviously the EPA and other agencies are doing work in the background, but residents feel that they are being kept in the dark, not to mention a somewhat smelly dark, about this issue. They are very disappointed in the dismissive response of this government to the problem to date.

There are some good points in Ms Fitzharris's amendment, but it does not add anything new. It calls on the government to work with affected residents in isolating the source of the odour, communicate with affected residents and report back. I already had that in my motion, but there is nothing more about the action that will be taken to identify the source of the issue and what actions might be taking place.

Very soon the worst of the summer period will be over; we will go into cooler weather and odour patterns may change as a result of that. Does that mean that in November 2016 we are going to start at the same point again, perhaps from residents making complaints and the EPA going to investigate? Is this what it is going to be year after year after year for residents of Tuggeranong? At what point is the government actually going to do anything? I thought I had provided some action points in my motion as to what might be done to identify the source of the issue, and they have been removed with this amendment.

I do not think we can keep on doing the same thing. We cannot just keep on sending people out to investigate the tip. We need to actually do something a bit different, starting now and not waiting until late this year and having to start all over again. For that reason, Madam Speaker, we will not be supporting this amendment today. I believe and the opposition believe that Tuggeranong residents deserve better than that. They deserve action and they deserve it now. We will be opposing this amendment.

Question put:

That **Ms Fitzharris's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 7

Mr Barr
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Ms Porter
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Adjournment

Cancer Support Group ACT Eden Monaro's Own—fundraiser

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (5.26): I move:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

I rise tonight to speak about my recent attendance at the Cancer Support Group ACT Eden Monaro's Own convoy for cancer family day held on 31 January. The convoy is an annual event in its 18th year run by the support group and involves members of the community coming together to raise money for those living with cancer. Individuals or companies are able to pay a registration fee and join in on the drive which, this year, ran from the Beard industrial estate to Exhibition Park in Canberra. It was an amazing sight, with over 400 motorcycle riders, including me, in attendance and many more trucks. It truly is touching to see not only the cancer support group and their sponsors but also so many members of the public coming together to raise money and awareness for such a great cause.

The charity that organises this amazing event, the Cancer Support Group ACT Eden Monaro's Own, was founded in 1985 by Yvonne Cuschieri, who originally intended to send 13 local teenagers living with cancer to a CanTeen national camp. After Yvonne's successful fundraising for these 13 teens social workers began asking for her help for other families who were facing crisis situations due to their illness. Over the years this once small charity organisation has grown to the point where it currently provides support for over 950 people in our community living with cancer. I am proud to say that, with ACT government assistance, the group has been able to put on two full-time office staff that help in the day-to-day running of the cancer support group and also provide emotional support to those who phone in.

Throughout the year numerous companies make donations to the support group in order for this amazing day to take place. This year the major sponsors of the event included the Elvin Group, Holcim concrete in Fyshwick, TJS transport and Icon Water. In addition to sponsor donations, individuals or companies can place bids to become the lead truck or bike for the convoy, with this money also going directly to the company to sponsor its great work.

The event itself serves two primary functions: firstly, it is a day aimed at increasing the awareness of the cancer support group and the important service it provides to those in our community living with cancer; and, secondly, it serves as a day out for those in our community living with this horrible disease.

The cancer support group recognises the tremendous effect that this disease has not only on sufferers' health but also their family life and gives people living with the disease opportunities to enjoy a day out with their families. That is, sometimes, increasingly difficult. This is what this event aims to serve as—a day where individuals and their families can enjoy a day out and relax.

Moreover, the work of the Cancer Support Group ACT Eden Monaro's Own becomes even more important when we are faced with the fact that one in three males and one in four females living in the ACT will develop cancer by the age of 75. This means that, as our community continues to grow, this horrible disease will only become more of an issue. It is with some comfort that I know that the cancer support group will be there helping those in our community so that they will not have to face that challenge alone.

Furthermore, the work of the cancer support group extends beyond organising the convoy for cancer charity event. The group also builds upon services offered by the Health Directorate by providing not only emotional support but also relief from financial burdens for those living with cancer and their families within the community. This support comes in the form of financial compensation for medical expenses such as chemotherapy and also food and petrol vouchers to help ease the household financial burden.

In closing, I sincerely thank not only the Cancer Support Group ACT Eden Monaro's Own for the amazing support and the work they do for those living with cancer in our community but also all of their sponsors and those involved in the convoy for cancer for the amazing support and generosity displayed by the community. Sponsors to note include the Elvin Group, Holcim concrete in Fyshwick, TJS transport and Icon Water. I also make special mention of Marty Haynes who organises the truck convoy all the way from Wollongong. I look forward to taking part in an even bigger and better convoy for cancer next year.

Ms Kate Carnell

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (5.31): This week in the Assembly I commend the recent appointment of Kate Carnell as the new Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. Small and medium business Australia wide will benefit from the many years of experience and expertise that Kate brings with her to the role. Kate's long-running background in business is both varied and notable. Growing up, her father operated a small building company and presently both her brother and son own small businesses. Having owned and managed her own business for many years before becoming Chief Minister of the ACT, Kate was well positioned to understand the challenges and opportunities facing small business in Australia. After her time as Chief Minister, Kate headed the Australian Food & Grocery Council, beyondblue and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Small and medium businesses are essential to the wellbeing of Australia's economy and labour force. Of the 10.6 million people employed in the private and non-financial sectors, 42 per cent are employed by small businesses and 24 per cent by medium businesses. Kate and her team will act as a single point of contact between government and business, advocating for reduced regulation and red tape, thereby promoting growth, opportunity and wealth creation for businesses in Australia.

Kate being a strong, professional role model experienced in the mental health sector, manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, I am grateful to have an opportunity today to

speak to her achievements to date. Through her advocacy efforts Kate ensured the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Australia was central to public policy debates, was a keen advocate of the free trade agreement, expanded chamber membership and renewed the chamber's corporate identity. She leaves the chamber with business confidence, sales and investment performing strongly, according to the latest business expectation survey of 2016.

While further facilitating business dispute resolution, working closely with industry associations and being the voice for the aspirations of smaller enterprises in Australia, I am sure Kate will continue this momentum in her new role. I thank Kate for her ongoing contribution to the ACT community, to business and local communities Australia wide and for being a strong woman and advocate for our economy, for jobs growth and for our future.

World Radio Day

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.33): There is a perhaps unintended but nonetheless delightful connection created by my motion on Radio 1RPH today: that on Saturday it is World Radio Day. I will be celebrating it by presenting two hours of newspaper readings on Radio 1RPH.

On 14 January 2013 the United Nations General Assembly formally endorsed UNESCO's previous proclamation of World Radio Day. It falls on 13 February each year, the anniversary of the establishment in 1946 of United Nations Radio.

According to the UNESCO World Radio Day website:

Radio is the mass media reaching the widest audience in the world. It is also recognized as a powerful communication tool and a low cost medium. Radio is specifically suited to reach remote communities and vulnerable people: the illiterate, the disabled, women, youth and the poor, while offering a platform to intervene in the public debate, irrespective of people's educational level. Furthermore, radio has a strong and specific role in emergency communication and disaster relief.

The objectives of World Radio Day are:

... to celebrate radio as a medium; to improve international cooperation between broadcasters; and to encourage major networks and community radio alike to promote access to information, freedom of expression and gender equality over the airwaves.

The theme of World Radio Day 2016 is "Radio in times of emergency and disaster". In setting this theme, UNESCO recognises that radio still remains the medium that reaches the widest audience worldwide, in the quickest possible time. For Canberra, this was well demonstrated in 2003 when 666 Canberra established itself conclusively as a leading emergency station. Its live recording of the disastrous Canberra bushfires was second to none. Tributes still flow to the ABC and, in particular, its presenters on the day, for their role in helping emergency services and the people of Canberra through that tumultuous time in our history—and deservedly so.

As I mentioned earlier today, radio plays a broader role in the community. The medium is as flexible as it is dynamic, as personal as it is for the whole community, as entertaining as it is informative. Radio 1RPH, as you know, where I am involved as a volunteer, provides an essential service to a specific audience—those who have reading difficulties and disabilities. Other community radio stations have other specific audiences. My senior adviser is a volunteer at Canberra’s arts and music radio station, ArtSound FM, with a particular focus on local music and arts. They do not just play music. And there are other community radio stations operating in Canberra that provide valuable services to their specific communities of interest. 2XX, Canberra’s first community radio station, started in 1976 as a narrowcaster for the ANU campus but now is a respected broadcaster across Canberra. Valley FM in Tuggeranong is the voice of the valley. CMS radio caters to Canberra’s diverse multicultural community in their own languages, featuring music and news from their cultures. 1WAY FM broadcasts specifically on Christian themes for the community. Over the border, Queanbeyan FM’s motto is “The best of everything”; it features music stretching from classical to pop and rock.

Community radio stations hold a special place in our society. Not only do they provide services to their communities of interests but they provide opportunities for members of the community to be involved. In nearly all cases, presenters are volunteers, and there are volunteers who look after the myriad of other tasks associated with running a radio station, from technical to administration, promotion, training, maintaining libraries, and even cleaning.

There are also mainstream radios that fill Canberra’s homes, cars, caravans and headsets, including AM and FM commercial stations and various ABC offerings and SBS. All of these stations, including community radio stations, are very professional outfits requiring many specialist skills and a dedication and commitment that rival most other professions.

I tip my lid to our broadcast radio services. I congratulate them on the important service they provide to our community. It is a pleasure to recognise them so near to the UNESCO-endorsed World Radio Day.

Companion House

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Disability, Minister for Small Business and the Arts and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (5.37): I rise to speak about one of the most impressive community organisations operating in Canberra today, Companion House. Headquartered at the Cook community hub, Companion House is a non-profit community organisation that provides support for refugees and asylum seekers in Canberra.

The ACT government is strongly committed to supporting refugees settling in Canberra, unapologetically and enthusiastically. I know this is reflective of our city’s welcoming attitude to refugees and migrants more generally.

Late last year I had the pleasure of visiting Companion House and meeting with Deborah Nelson, counselling team leader, and Glenn Flanagan, community development and training team leader. We discussed the current situation on accommodation and access to education facing young people on bridging visas, temporary protection visas and safe haven enterprise visas in Canberra.

Companion House is involved with several programs that aim to find accommodation solutions for this cohort, including the asylum seeker transitional accommodation program and “Our Place”. The latter is run by Barnardos, in conjunction with Housing ACT, specifically for young people in full-time study.

Share houses and couch surfing are very common for young people on these types of visas in Canberra, but many are seeking home stays. They want a family connection so that they can experience a “normal” home life and consider it a great opportunity for learning English. Organising home stays is not really within the operating reach of Companion House, but the organisation does try to find home stay hosts on an informal basis.

The informal networks used to seek out home stay hosts are naturally quite limited, and we discussed how the net could be widened, especially looking to experience in other jurisdictions. This is something really to turn to our attention to, especially given the upcoming intake of Syrian refugees.

On the access to education front, there have been some good news stories. The University of Canberra has offered places for five asylum seeker students on temporary visas for reduced fees, and some grants towards access to education for asylum seekers were made by the ACT Education and Training Directorate in December. We also discussed how the possibility of HECS-HELP style loan schemes with refugee and asylum seeker students is a key policy desire for Companion House.

Finally, we discussed how people on temporary protection visas or safe haven enterprise visas lose their special benefits payment from the commonwealth—approximately \$420 per fortnight—if they undertake courses which take more than 12 months to complete. This would stifle ambitions for university study, for instance. I want to place on the record here my profound disagreement with the commonwealth on this. It is totally counterproductive and deserves the strongest criticism of the refugee and asylum seeker support sector.

There are good things happening, but plenty of challenges too. We should count ourselves lucky that we have such a fantastic organisation as Companion House working to help this very vulnerable group of people.

Foreign aid—Laos

MR COE (Ginninderra) (5.41): I rise tonight to speak about an event that I attended at the end of January at the Southern Cross Club in Woden to raise funds for much-needed medical equipment for a children’s hospital in Laos. Each year for the past six years Pandora and Phan, the owners of the Angkor What Asian grocery shop

in the Belconnen mall, have organised a dinner to raise funds to help impoverished children in Laos. The evening was a wonderful celebration featuring entertainers who travelled all the way from Thailand to perform at the event and similar fundraisers in other Australian cities. The masters of ceremony, Sue and Jean, did a wonderful job hosting the event.

Last year's event involved money being raised to go to fundraising efforts to help reconstruct a school in the village of Chaengsavang in the Naxaithong district. Prior to its refurbishment the walls of this school were made of bamboo. I am told that the school had bare ground, with broken tables and benches. Previously, most of the children from this area walked many kilometres to neighbouring villages because their local school could not accommodate them. Now the school can accommodate around 50 children.

The proceeds of this year's event will go to a children's hospital in the Bortein district. Basic medical equipment, such as oxygen supply systems, humidicribs and ultrasound machines are badly needed.

Australia and Laos are longstanding regional partners and share a strong and diverse relationship, underpinned by deepening economic ties, community links and development cooperation. Obviously, Australia has a strong interest in ensuring Laos continues to develop as a stable neighbour that is increasingly well positioned to contribute to regional security and economic growth. Australian aid to Laos aims to build prosperity and reduce poverty while helping Laos to take advantage of economic integration within the region.

Information on the website of DFAT indicates that the Australian government will provide an estimated \$37.9 million in total official development assistance to Laos in 2015-16. However, ongoing fundraising efforts, such as those from Pandora and Phan, make a huge difference to people's lives and help build strong community links between Australia and Laos by raising awareness and undertaking practical action at a local level.

I thank Phan and Pandora for all they are doing through their extraordinary commitment to help the people of Laos, and their spirit of philanthropy should be applauded. I also thank the Laos community and the friends who attended the fundraising evening, all in all, about 250 people. It was a great event and I wish them all the best for the seventh event in 2017.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.44 pm.