



Debates

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Wednesday, 4 May 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.

Absence of Clerk

The Speaker informed the Assembly that, due to the absence of the Clerk on personal leave, the Deputy Clerk will act as Clerk for the duration of the Clerk's leave.

Petition

The following petition was lodged for presentation, by Mrs Dunne, from 100 residents:

Page bus services—petition No 2-16

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that ACTION bus services on Burkitt Street, Page, ACT have been discontinued. As a result, public transport options for residents of the three retirement villages and aged-care centres on Burkitt Street are significantly limited.

Your petitioners therefore request the Assembly to reinstate ACTION bus services and covered bus stops with seating on Burkitt Street, Page, ACT as a service to the hundreds of aged residents living in the retirement villages as well as for other local residents.

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

Statement by member

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra): Madam Assistant Speaker, I seek leave to make a few brief remarks on the petition relating to the reinstatement of a bus route along Burkitt Street in Page.

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I thank members for leave to speak. Madam Assistant Speaker, there are three retirement villages along Burkitt Street in Page. Between them, Ridgecrest, Villaggio Sant' Antonio and Coral Park RSL LifeCare accommodate some 300 self-care residents. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of some of the residents of the Burkitt Street aged-care accommodation. Welcome to your Assembly.

Many of the Burkitt Street residents enjoy quite reasonable mobility and like to go shopping, visit friends and relatives, attend entertainment events as well as go to medical appointments and attend to other health-related needs associated with the process of ageing. But some are unable to use their own transport and they need to rely on others. One of the means has been ACTION buses.

But in its wisdom this government has decided that the bus routes that run along Burkitt Street and provide an important service to local residents, are no longer required. This government cancelled the Burkitt Street services and then even removed the bus shelters, which were often used by residents as resting points when they simply wanted to go for a walk.

I have made a number of representations to the government, including letters and questions on notice, on behalf of Burkitt Street residents. In answers to my questions on notice, the then minister for transport, Mr Rattenbury, described the removal of the bus services and shelters, which were replaced with the so-called flexible bus service—putting the onus back on the villages for the provision of other transport options—as “improvements”. Mr Rattenbury said that the government consulted on the so-called improvements. But we all know what the government’s consultation process is like in most cases. It is little more than lip-service when it comes to matters of this kind. Clearly, the views of the Burkitt Street residents were not considered.

I would like to contrast the sort of consultation that was provided for the Burkitt Street residents with the sort of consultation that is outlined in the government’s MOU with the unions, where it describes “consultation” as follows:

Consultation means providing relevant information to UnionsACT and/or the relevant unions as identified ... It means more than a mere exchange of information. For consultation to be effective, the participants must be contributing to the decision-making process, not only in appearance but in fact.

Burkitt Street residents did not get to make any contribution to the decision-making about their bus services. Mr Rattenbury said that the government did not consult on the removal of the bus shelters. Had he done so, he might have become aware of the multipurpose uses of these shelters by local residents.

It is true that the retirement villages have community transport available for residents. But those services are generally for group travel. They cannot be expected to meet the day-to-day needs of individual residents. They certainly cannot meet the needs of residents who might decide during breakfast that they would like to go to the shops, the movies or a restaurant.

As for ACTION’s flexible service, it is one of the great misnomers of this government. Madam Assistant Speaker, it is abjectly inflexible. Anyone who wants to use the service must book fully two days prior to travel. How is that a flexible service for a resident who might suddenly receive notice of a visitor coming to town, who might decide over breakfast, as we all do, to make a particular visit that day or who might suddenly be asked to meet a doctor’s appointment because there is a cancellation?

For the 300 retirement village residents along Burkitt Street, Page, the removal of the bus routes and bus shelters is not an improvement. The removal of the bus routes and shelters along Burkitt Street is a deprivation of lifestyle, of independence, of wellbeing, of self-esteem, of flexibility for our ageing residents. Mr Doszpot's motion today will examine in more detail this government's ignorance of the needs of our ageing population. The action taken by the government on Burkitt Street in Page is just another example of that ignorance.

This petition was signed by 100 residents of the retirement villages on Burkitt Street. That represents a third of all residents. I was able to doorknock and speak to many residents. My staff also spoke to many residents as we have been around Burkitt Street. I fully endorse the petition and call on the government to act to reinstate the bus services in Burkitt Street.

Legislative Assembly (Parliamentary Budget Officer) Bill 2016

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.07): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The issue of costings of all policies by any political party is very important. Indeed the financial work done by committees of the Assembly is very important and the scrutiny that appears in the budget is very important, because to have sustainable long-term government delivery of services in this territory we must be able to pay for them.

Over the years, we have had some interesting conflicts. If I were to hark back to the bad old days, I remember a brochure that the Labor Party put out. It was a big, glossy, red-covered A4 sheet with a statement "It's the fact" stamped all over the front. It was about how certain policies were going to drive the territory into debt and deficit for decades, all of which was untrue.

We have had some evolution in regard to this issue. Indeed in the previous Assembly there was consideration of a parliamentary budget officer. What was determined was that we would give some financial support to the estimates committee to have an economics adviser to provide some support in regard to its work and that also a bill would be introduced, now called the Election Commitments Costing Act 2012. It set out a certain process. Having watched over the past four years, and indeed over the past four or five terms, how this works, it is time that we take the next step.

The idea of the PBO was a good idea in the last Assembly. I note that since then in July 2012 even the federal parliament has established a parliamentary budget officer. Having consulted with colleagues there, I can say that everyone is very pleased with the performance of that office, the way it assists the formation of policy and how it

makes sure that Treasury, which often ends up being the final arbiter on these things, is not politicised.

The reason I table this bill today is to confirm that we do not want to go back to the bad old days. There are some very good examples where there are differences in costings. Indeed, at the last election, whether it was the delivery of green bin services or school class sizes, for example, there was some argy-bargy, and this will always be the case. But if we can have an individual whose job, guaranteed by the independence of the position, is to make sure that all policies are costed, and costed in the same way, we can then actually have a much more productive discussion on the validity and the utility of the policy rather than one side's assertion that the other side has got the numbers wrong.

We will all have to add up the numbers in the end and make the case for what it is we want to do but this, I think, is the next step in the process. We have had these conflicts in the past. To address that we passed the Election Commitments Costing Act 2012. I am not sure we all agree it was perfect but it was a good step forward. I think it certainly helped and it took a lot of that angst away. But there is still a reliance on Treasury.

Treasury does a set of standard costings for standard functions. Treasury still gets to receive the policy. Treasury then still has to make the decision. Let's face it; at the end of the day the Treasury works for the government, whoever that might be. So the next step to make sure that this independence is still right is to go for an even better and more independent model.

What this bill would do is give access to a fully independent policy costing unit separate from the Treasury directorate. That independent body would be called the parliamentary budget officer. The bill to establish the parliamentary budget officer ensures that all members get support on a level playing field. The public accounts committee, for instance, would have access to those services, as would any of the committees.

This goes beyond individuals or parties. It is actually designed to be of assistance and an aid to all of us in whatever facet of our activities we undertake here, particularly for something like the estimates committee. I think that last year the estimates committee spent something like \$30,000 on getting assistance, on getting the analysis to undertake more detailed work so that the estimates committee could do its job properly. So I think that in terms of the evolution, this is certainly where we are heading. The question, I guess, for members will be: do they think this is the right time? Something exciting might happen in about 165 days from now. I think this is the perfect time to set this up and to have it ready for the upcoming election.

In terms of support functions for all members, the PBO would provide policy costings on a request by a member of the Assembly. During the pre-election period it would provide policy costings on request by an authorised member of a parliamentary party or an independent member of the Legislative Assembly. It would provide members with support on, for instance, analysing the budget papers. It would provide support to any of the committees, whether standing or select, to assist them in their functions. It

could also undertake general research and analysis of budget papers and financial policy settings.

What the bill proposes is that the PBO become an officer of the Assembly to guarantee that independence. The bill has in it a range of safeguards to ensure a robust appointment process and, if necessary, a dismissal process for inappropriate behaviour. In particular, it provides for protection of confidential information so that the PBO can go to Treasury or various departments to request information about particular services, and that request must remain inside the appropriate service.

We are approaching a period where the services of a PBO would deliver maximum value. I believe that it would be appropriate to pass this bill in June which, of course, would be the budget sitting itself. I do not expect that the PBO would cost a great deal. One of the provisions of the bill is that the PBO would be appointed for a period of up to four years. In effect, you could have a PBO for a whole term. You could find somebody who gets experience at looking at the four budgets that lead up to the next election. That would be useful in terms of continuity. The act provides for the PBO to be appointed for potentially up to two terms.

The explanatory statement just gives the overall arrangements about how it would work. We have relied very heavily on the federal legislation which seems to be working very well. What it does is give the PBO protection. What it does is give ordinary members protection. What it does is give the confidentiality that is required to make this work. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Unit Titles (Management) Amendment Bill 2016

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.16): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Today I am pleased to table the Unit Titles (Management) Amendment Bill 2016 and its explanatory statement. This is a straightforward bill designed to fix a problem in the current unit titles legislation. It has been prepared in response to concerns from unit owners about the unfair way they are charged for water usage.

Historically, many units were built with one water meter and individual owners were charged for a proportion of their water use. The proportion was usually the total charge divided by the number of units. This is a simple way of dividing usage, but it is not fair. This approach means that people who use large amounts of water are paying for less; meanwhile others may well be paying more. This means there is no incentive for people to be careful with water usage.

Residents often contact the opposition frustrated about how much they are paying despite trying to be careful about how much water they actually use. Older residents or young residents who live by themselves are subsidising families who may be using more water, for example. The inequity of the situation is even worse in situations where both residential and commercial units have their water usage measured by the same water meter. Owners of residential units are often slugged with huge water bills even when they are taking steps to conserve water.

The current unit titles legislation allows individual owners to install their own water meters but only after the passage of an unopposed motion. This is nearly impossible to secure because those owners who are using more water may not agree to go out of the pooled arrangement. Some owners have spent years trying to persuade other owners to agree to individual water meters with no success, and they are understandably frustrated. The possibility of getting an individual water meter installed for a commercial unit is even less likely.

This bill reduces the threshold for allowing installation of an individual water meter to a simple majority. This will mean that a majority of owners in a unit complex can decide that an individual water meter is allowed. Reducing the threshold to require a simple majority will allow more owners to choose to install an individual meter while still giving the majority of unit owners the power to reject such a proposal.

In discussion with stakeholders it has become clear that water usage is a major problem in mixed-use buildings or facilities. I have been told about several buildings where residential units are significantly subsidising commercial units. In one case the total water bill doubled after a bar opened in the complex. People living in the apartments above the bar had their water bills double despite not using any additional water themselves. Under the present legislation there is no way to force the owners of the bar to pay for what they are using.

For this reason, my bill includes a provision to allow a special resolution which requires a two-thirds majority to require a sub-meter to be installed for a unit. This means in the situation I mentioned that the owners of the residential units could agree to force the owner of the commercial unit to install a sub-meter and be correctly charged for the water that is used.

My bill also allows the owners corporation to recover administrative costs where they are responsible for administering water meters. In some cases it would be possible for sub-meters to be read by Icon Water and the bill will be sent directly to the owner. However, in some cases this will not be possible. In these cases the owners corporation will be responsible for determining how much each unit is required to pay. This may involve extra time and expense for the owners corporation and it is only fair that these costs be recovered.

Another change included in this bill is a provision for water to be charged through a bill rather than in advance through a budget. This means that owners are required to pay for what they actually use rather than having to pay up-front and potentially overpaying and going into credit. This will also mean that the owners corporation does not have to repay owners for an overpayment for their contributions.

Turning to the specifics of the bill, clause 4 allows the owners corporation to enter a unit to install a sub-meter. Clause 5 allows a unit owner to install a sub-meter in their unit at their own expense if an ordinary resolution has authorised it. The details of the resolution would also guide the owners corporation in determining the amount the owner is required to pay for their share of the owners corporation's water usage for common property.

The owners corporation will also determine how the owner will make an extra payment or be refunded if their contribution is based on an estimate. The clause also allows the owners corporation to require an owner to install a sub-meter after passing a special resolution to install the sub-meter and recover the cost from the owner if the owner does not comply within a reasonable time.

Clauses 6 and 7 are technical amendments to clarify the general fund contributions payable by owners. Clause 8 amends the notice requirement so that owners who have individual water meters will be given accurate determinations of their contributions.

Clause 9 of the bill ensures that owners with a sub-meter are given accurate information about the amount they owe, including administration costs that the owners corporation may need to recover. Clause 10 inserts a new definition of a "sub-meter" in the legislation.

As I stated at the beginning, this legislation is straightforward. It is not a major policy change, but it will make a difference for many unit owners who are trying to do the right thing by conserving water and therefore reducing their bills. It will make a difference for owners who are struggling to pay their water bills because they are subsidising other people's usage. I also hope allowing individual meters will encourage those people who are not being careful about how much water they use to take more care when they are faced with higher bills.

Since releasing an exposure draft last year I have been contacted by many stakeholders who have expressed their support for this legislation. It is clear this bill meets a genuine community need and I hope the government will choose to reflect the community's view and support this as legislation.

The Canberra Liberals believe this bill is a practical way to encourage people to conserve water by not unfairly making them pay for other people's water usage. The Canberra Liberals have listened to the concerns raised by constituents and brought forward legislation to solve the problem. Unlike the Labor-Greens government that wastes its time on unnecessary and costly projects, the Canberra Liberals are listening to what people in Canberra actually want. Unlike the Labor-Greens government, the Canberra Liberals will lead a government that deals with the practical matters and issues that face everyone on a daily basis. Instead of a government focused solely on a tram, we will have a government that focuses on all of Canberra. This bill is, in a small way, reflective of that intention.

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

Government funding priorities

MR HINDER (Ginninderra) (10.24): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott MP, promised in 2013 that there would be “no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions and no cuts to the ABC or SBS”;
- (b) in its 2014 Budget the Abbott Government cut funding to education, health, concessions for pensioner concession card and seniors card holders, the ABC and SBS;
- (c) the Turnbull Government has refused to reinstate the full amount of funding cut from education, health and concessions;
- (d) the Commonwealth views repairing its budget as more important than funding health, education and important concessions for pensioners and seniors;
- (e) the ACT Government has filled the shortfall in funding caused by the Commonwealth’s axing of the “National Partnership Agreement on Certain Concessions for Pensioner Concession Card and Seniors Card Holders”; and
- (f) the Commonwealth has shifted the responsibility for funding this concession directly back on to States and Territories; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) continue to provide support for low-income Canberrans, including through the ACT Concessions Program;
- (b) continue to provide high quality health, education and community services for the Canberra community; and
- (c) welcome the commitments from Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and federal Labor to resource the full Gonski needs-based funding model for Australia’s schools.

I thank the Assembly for the opportunity to speak on last night’s Liberal Party budget and the crippling effects the federal Liberals’ continued cuts to the public service and concessions for pensioners and seniors across our community will have on Canberra and on Canberrans. The Liberal Party have a long history of having little or no regard for our city as our capital and of having no intention of keeping their promises to the community when they talk about funding commitments and support for jobs and public services.

I am sure those opposite remember well what the former Prime Minister Mr Abbott promised in the lead-up to the last federal election. He said that there would be “no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions ... and no cuts to the ABC or SBS”. Subsequently, the federal Liberal Party did exactly the opposite. They ripped \$80 billion of funding out of health and education from the states; cut Indigenous programs; attempted a GP co-payment; supported reducing pension indexation; and cut funding to the public broadcasters, resulting in job losses and a less informed public. They also cut the national partnership agreement on concessions for pensioner concession cards and senior cardholders. The ACT Labor government, by contrast, has filled the shortfall in funding for that program, as we have in many other areas.

Canberrans were rightly outraged at Mr Abbott’s duplicity, and they continue to be outraged at his successor, Mr Turnbull, for not reversing the unbelievably short-sighted decisions that took much-needed funding from our schools and our hospitals. What we saw in last night’s budget is a shocking case of wrong priorities, deeply out of touch with the hopes and expectations of ordinary Australians. Ordinary Australians know that a fair go and greater equality of opportunity improve our economy and our society.

The Liberal government is still attempting to ram a \$2 billion higher education cut through the Senate, which is incredibly short-sighted given the importance of education to our future as a nation. It is also particularly bad news for Canberra, with education being one of the most important sectors in Canberra’s economy and a sector that this government, the ACT Labor government, has been actively growing.

The Liberal government will further damage Canberra’s economy by increasing what they term “efficiency dividends” on the public service. We saw the decimation of Canberra’s economy with the Howard cuts, compounded by the Abbott cuts and freezes to public service recruitment. Now we can expect further harm to our economy and our community from the Turnbull government, it appears. On top of this the federal Liberal government still refuse to commit to a proper needs-based funding model for our schools.

All of these cuts will disproportionately impact on Canberra and Canberrans. They do this in the name of tax cuts, which are poorly targeted and damaging to the interests of Australian families. The tax cuts announced in last night’s budget do little to support Australian families. In fact, three-quarters of Australian taxpayers receive absolutely nothing by way of tax cuts, while individuals who earn the most get double tax cuts. Someone on a million dollars will get a \$16,715 tax cut while a single mother with an income of \$87,000 per year with two children in high school is \$4,463 worse off.

Can somebody tell me why the Liberal Party hates Canberra? Is it because the Liberal Party exist in a bubble? The economic Darwinist party they have become never has had, and never will have, any commitment to truly being part of the community. Do they exist on a different planet where the poor do not drive cars and getting your first home is as simple, as the last failed Treasurer said, as waking up and getting a high paying job?

It is because of this ideological blindness that conservative politicians around the world appear to be unaware of the human face of every dollar they slash from public funding to vital community services. It has always made me laugh that the leader of the Canberra Liberals and some of his far right wing colleagues have to sit in silence pretending they have nothing to do with their federal counterparts and their never-ending romper stomper attempts on Canberra and Canberrans.

Publicly, there appears to be a deafening silence from the Canberra Liberals whenever the federal Liberal government shows its true colours. It is particularly awkward for them that today the Canberra Liberals must try to say to Canberrans that, despite the actions of their federal counterparts, they have the territory's best interests at heart, even though a Canberra Liberal government would mean more bankrupt ideology that supports the same sorts of slash-and-burn cuts to jobs, services and support for vulnerable people across the ACT.

The people who continuously slash jobs and services are supposed to be mates of the leader of the Canberra Liberals. He has them on speed dial. If he wanted to argue for more jobs and services in Canberra, he could, I would assume. He could come out publicly and stand up for Canberrans. But he does not, and he will not, because underneath that pro-Canberra facade he, too, wants to cut this city to the bone. He is missing in action, far too busy spreading lies about light rail rather than standing up for small business people, workers and pensioners in Canberra.

For all the Canberra Liberals' huff and puff on how the world will end, Canberra still gets light rail in this budget. One glimmer of hope from last night's federal budget is that, despite the increased cuts for Canberra, the so-called efficiency dividends and talks of budget repair, the federal Liberals still see funding Canberra's light rail as a priority for the future of this city and the future of this country. This shows that those opposite are out of touch with Canberrans at the same time as they are at loggerheads with Infrastructure Australia and, inexplicably, even the federal Treasurer and Prime Minister. How sad it must be for them when the community have it confirmed that they are out of touch with the interests of Canberra and at the same time their federal colleagues are calling them economic lunatics.

On the subject of rail, it appears that the Prime Minister is a big fan and views various forms of rail as an important part of the city's and the country's development. The federal government has committed billions of dollars to light rail and rail projects in Sydney and Melbourne and across the country. This begs the question of why the Canberra Liberals think that Canberra should become a second-class city when the rest of Australia is moving ahead on expanding public transport options for their citizens.

Just like Senator Seselja, those opposite do not fight for the public service, and they do not fight for Canberra. The truth is that the Canberra Liberals support federal Liberal cuts and mis-described efficiency dividends which will put massive economic strain on Canberra's economy.

Civil servants in this city can continue to expect more pay cuts from the Turnbull Liberal government and no commitment to resolving ongoing industrial disputes with the public service departments. But this debate is not just about the direct impact on public service workers. Fifty-five per cent of Canberran businesses rely on the spending power of the public servants in this city to keep them afloat and make a profit. When the Liberals cut jobs, they are cutting customers and cash flow for Canberra's small businesses.

As someone with 30 years experience in small business, I know firsthand the crippling effect of government cuts to small business confidence and ultimately to the health of Canberra's economy. While I support small businesses and welcome the announcement by the shadow treasurer, Chris Bowen, that the Labor Party will support cutting small business taxes, the fact is that if businesses in Canberra have no customers they will not find a tax cut all that useful. Businesses without customers employ no-one and pay no tax. That is why it is so important that we continue to drive demand in Canberra via a strong public service and commitment to growth throughout the territory.

I lived through the Howard years and saw just how much time it took for Canberra to recover from the Liberal government's ideologically driven cuts to public services. We saw a re-run of these cuts in 2013 when the Abbott government took a sledgehammer to Canberra's economy. It took almost two years for our city to recover.

One of the most disturbing aspects of last night's federal budget is the massive gap between its rhetoric and reality. The budget claims to be an economic plan for job growth. In reality, it is a plan to cut jobs and small business confidence. It is also a plan to continue cuts to the core government services of health and education and concessions to pensioners and seniors.

One of my fears is that Canberra can expect a similar approach if those opposite ever get their hands on the territory budget. The approach this Labor government is taking is in stark contrast to that of the Liberal Party. It is only due to successive ACT Labor governments' commitment to growth and jobs in new industries and businesses in Canberra that we have weathered the Abbott-Turnbull cuts and become one of the best-performing economies in the country.

Once again, all this is put at risk by another federal Liberal budget that seeks a further efficiency dividend in the upcoming years. Rest assured, Madam Speaker, that when this city goes through economic turbulence we in the government roll up our sleeves and start doing the job of diversifying our economy, generating more jobs and greater prosperity for the people of this city.

We will always defend the need for a strong public sector and access to quality public services in health, education and transport as a means of ensuring that Canberrans live a happy, fulfilling life here in Australia's most livable city.

The fact that the defining purpose of this Barr Labor government is to ensure a prosperous economy gives us the ability to help those who need a hand up. We do

these things because we believe in Canberra. As we can see from last night's budget, unlike this Barr Labor government, the federal Liberals do not. They have no vision for a strong sustainable economy and future for the territory; nor do those opposite. Unlike them, we will continue to stand up for this city.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.36): What a dismal effort. If you are going to come in here and have one of these hyper-political motions that is just going to be slap and rhetoric trying to conflate federal and ACT issues, at least have a little bit of enthusiasm about it. If you are just going to run political narratives you are best served doing it with some degree of enthusiasm rather than just reading a B-grade speech and stumbling over every second word. Despite the dismal effort, I will try to go to some of the content of what Mr Hinder has said.

Ultimately this is trying to create a scare campaign, and it has fallen a little bit flat. Those opposite love to try to conflate the federal government and the ACT government and create a bit of a scare campaign—it is all doom and gloom. I can imagine how upset they were last night when we saw critique and analysis from people, including the *Canberra Times*, saying this is good for Canberra and will be good in the long term for Canberra. I refer members to Markus Mannheim's article in the *Canberra Times*. I imagine the wind has gone out of the sails a little bit, and that might explain why Mr Hinder was so flat in his delivery.

What we have seen from those opposite is that the critique they have of the Canberra Liberals is seemingly about a budget that was put in by the federal Liberals a number of years ago. What we do not hear from those opposite is a critique of us. What we hear are attempts at smearing people who are no longer prime ministers as some sort of conflated issue to attack us. If that is all you have got, then good luck with that.

The difference fundamentally between us and them, Madam Speaker, is that we will always stand up for Canberra. Despite what Mr Hinder asserts, when a number of cuts were made we did stand up. In actual fact, there was a front page headline in the *Canberra Times* from me that said, "Not Happy, Tony". We went out strongly and we said, "Look, we don't want to see any job cuts, whether they be Liberal or whether they be Labor."

When Kevin Rudd was saying, "I'm going to take a meat axe to the public service," where was Mr Barr? Where were the rest of his colleagues? Hiding, Madam Speaker; hiding from the truth. They will try to get anything they can to smear, to attack, to conflate issues, to create uncertainty in the ACT for their own political benefit if they think that is of value. But when the Labor Party federally with their chaotic government was wrecking the Australian budget and ripping jobs out of this town, where was Mr Barr? Hiding under his desk, not saying boo. So let us not have any of this hypocrisy; let us turn to the facts of the matter.

The reality is that the Labor Party's so-called health and education funding was a cruel illusion. It was never funded. On the eve of the demise of the Rudd-Gillard fiasco, this money was promised in the outyears but it had never been allocated in any budget. Sadly, that money could not be delivered because it had never been funded.

I would like to see as much money as possible come into our health and education systems. There are no bones about that, and I hope I would be on a unity ticket with those opposite on that. But let us make sure that it is real money. Let us make sure it is allocated dollars in the budget, and let us recognise that that money did not exist. One can refer to the ABC website and go to fact check to see that that money never existed. It was make-believe money.

We want to see more funding for health and more funding for education, and we have seen that. We have seen millions of dollars extra come into real budgets under the term of this federal government. But we will always want more, and in that I am on a unity ticket with those opposite: we always want more into the ACT health and education systems. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

As I referred to at the beginning of my speech, what we are seeing is an attempt by those opposite in government to try to allocate blame, to create fear and to create uncertainty to try to cover up their own failings. It is extraordinary that the individual who would critique anybody on education expenditure is the same individual who cut 23 schools. The same person who is critiquing me now on education expenditure is the same person—Mr Andrew Barr—who, when he was education minister, cut 23 schools in the ACT. Let us never forget it.

Mr Smyth: Wanted to shut 39!

MR HANSON: He did. If there was not resistance and a good argument put forward and a fight from the community and from the Canberra Liberals, 39 schools would have been cut. Mr Andrew Barr cut 23 schools and is now the same person complaining that the federal government is not meeting Labor's ridiculously cruel illusion of funding that never existed. So let us not have that sort of hypocrisy.

Then we have Mr Corbell complaining about health funding. Real funding has gone up in the budget, and it is Mr Corbell who has cut 60 beds at the University of Canberra public hospital. He has cut 60 beds. The minister before him, Ms Gallagher, cut \$41 million from the development of the Canberra Hospital. These people who are cutting and cutting and cutting beds and funding to redevelop our health system are the same people who are trying to blame someone else.

I remind members that, as we saw from the national health performance report last week, it is this lot through their mismanagement and their excesses that are costing us by running the two most inefficient hospitals in Australia. The cost per occasion of service for treatment in the Canberra Hospital is \$6,100 when there are like hospitals in Victoria that can do the same for \$3,100. That means that tens of millions of dollars that would otherwise be directed to our health system to fund nurses, to fund doctors, to fund hospital beds is being wasted by the mismanagement and incompetence of ACT Labor.

If we were spending that money and we were getting the best service in Australia with the best waiting times in Australia, I would say, "Well, it is worth spending double what every other hospital spends." Sadly, that is not true. Sadly, the reality is that you

will wait longer for emergency treatment at the Canberra Hospital than anywhere else in Australia. So we are paying twice what we should be through your rates, through all other fees and charges, but we are getting the worst delivery in Australia. The same comes when we look at things like infection rates, readmissions to hospital, the cost to visit a GP, the number of people deferring treatment, the number of hospital beds that we have. On any measure we are paying more and we are getting less from ACT Labor. And what is their response? Try to blame someone else, rather than take responsibility themselves for their own chronic mismanagement.

It is the same when we look at education. This is the government that through their mismanagement of our education sector has led to schools being overcrowded. We saw under this government national news when an autistic child was locked in a cage. That is what happens under this government. We have an education system that has been so run down by this government that teachers on the front line are so under pressure that it resulted in an autistic boy being locked in a cage. This minister that cut 23 schools then has the audacity to try to blame somebody else for his own chronic mismanagement. It is absolutely outrageous.

Of course, we are all paying for this, because look at what has happened to rates—42 per cent, 45 per cent average. But in many, many suburbs across this town, when you knock on doors or go to shopping centres and talk to people, people's rates have gone up exponentially. People are paying more than anywhere else in Australia for their household rates, and what are they getting for it? The longest waiting times in Australia, overcrowded schools, a rundown bus system that has the lowest patronage figures in the ACT's history and fees and charges going through the roof.

Remember when late night parking fees came into Civic. I think it was Ms Lawder who questioned Mr Barr about what impact that would have on lower paid Canberrans, on retail workers, on hospitality workers. And what did Mr Barr say? "Well, it's the difference when you are having a \$100 dinner in Civic between sparkling water and still water." No wonder the government are failing on every single measure when that is the attitude this arrogant, out-of-touch government have. They think the fees and charges and the cruel cost of living measures they are imposing on Canberrans are equivalent to sparkling versus still water at a \$100 dinner in Civic. How out of touch and arrogant. How dismal. How cruel. Then they have the audacity to say, "Well, this is none of our problem. Let's try to blame somebody else for this chronic mismanagement." Well, these are all factors that relate directly to what is happening in the ACT.

Of course, in the budget last night we saw initiatives that will get business going. On the back of the work that was done in the previous budget last year what we are seeing this year are more initiatives that will get small business going. I have heard the Business Chamber talking positively; I have heard Peter Strong from Small Business Australia talking. There are many small businesses in this town—the people who create wealth and who create jobs—saying, "This is great. This is really good for Australia and it's really good for Canberra. We're going to get more employment. We're going to get more activity happening, and that is good for Australia. That is good for Canberra."

What is this government's response, Madam Speaker? This government's response is to say, "Stuff small business. Stuff business, because all we care about is our mates in the CFMEU." So as long as they have their little secret MOU with the CFMEU that enables the CFMEU—the thugs in the CFMEU—to go out and intimidate, to coerce, to demand from business exactly what the CFMEU wants, then this government is happy. This government does not give a stuff about small business. This government only cares about their mates in the lobbying sector and their CFMEU mates that pile tens of thousands of dollars into their pockets. It is the CFMEU that funds Andrew Barr and his colleagues and it is the CFMEU that funds Shane Rattenbury and his colleagues.

When they looked at the budget last night and saw all these initiatives for small business, they did not give a hoot. They do not care because all they care about is what is in it for the CFMEU so that the CFMEU can do better and give them more money. That is the sort of attitude we see from this government.

Madam Speaker, I have circulated an amendment that makes the points that I have just made in my speech. I am calling on the government to stop trying to blame someone else and accept responsibility for their own chronic mismanagement. That would make a nice change, would it not? They should accept responsibility for their poor performance in service delivery and massive hikes in the cost of living. They should better support low income Canberrans, and there are many ways that can be done. I note there is a review of the concessions program. I hope that is not just another attack on older Canberrans—as Mr Doszpot will be litigating shortly—from this ageist, out-of-touch Chief Minister.

Ms Burch: Point of order, Madam Speaker, please.

MR HANSON: Can you stop the clock, please?

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

Ms Burch: While I was upstairs I heard Mr Hanson say in his narrative that this side of the chamber "does not give a stuff". I query whether that is parliamentary language and acceptable for you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order, if an issue arises, you should bring it to the presiding officer's attention at the time. I am sorry, I did not notice it. I would not rule it as unparliamentary, but I would remind Mr Hanson and other members to be mindful of their language. Mr Hanson, on the question that the motion be agreed to.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do not think there is any critique of the actual effect. The language could be changed—let us say they could not give a hoot, they could not care less, they could not give a damn. All are equally valid, and I withdraw could not "give a stuff". My amendment goes on that—

Ms Burch: Sorry, I apologise—

MR HANSON: Could you stop the clock, please?

MADAM SPEAKER: Have you got a point of order?

Ms Burch: A point of order. Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure if you asked him to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I did not ask Mr Hanson to withdraw, but he obviously considered what you said and has withdrawn anyhow. I do not have to ask him to withdraw. I did not think that it was necessary, but Mr Hanson obviously did think it was necessary. So, in the remaining 43 seconds, Mr Hanson on the question that the motion be agreed to.

MR HANSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The amendment is very clear. Stop light rail, start fixing the health system, start investing in community services and education, stop tripling people's rates and gouging them, and provide better support for lower paid Canberrans instead of behaving as you are: an out-of-touch, arrogant government. I move:

Omit all words after "notes that", substitute:

- "(a) Andrew Barr, when Education Minister, closed 23 schools;
- (b) Health Minister, Simon Corbell, cut 60 overnight beds from the University of Canberra Public Hospital;
- (c) the ACT Labor Government is cutting jobs in ACT Policing and Access Canberra;
- (d) the former ACT Labor Health Minister cut \$41m from the redevelopment of The Canberra Hospital;
- (e) Canberrans suffer the longest emergency department waits in Australia and overcrowded schools;
- (f) household rates, household electricity bills and other fees and charges are being gouged by ACT Labor to pay for light rail; and
- (g) ACT Labor's only response is to blame the Federal Government for ACT Labor's own appalling performance; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) stop light rail and instead start providing high quality health, education and community services for the Canberra community;
- (b) stop tripling Canberrans' rates and gouging Canberrans through massive increased fees and power costs;
- (c) provide better support for low income Canberrans; and
- (d) accept responsibility for poor performance in service delivery and massive hikes in the cost of living."

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.52): I thank Mr Hinder for raising his motion and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for providing further evidence of being unfit to hold the position of Chief Minister with that series of personally offensive rants about individuals, no focus on the real issues, and consistently misleading this place, and through—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: It is all right. Could you withdraw the imputation that Mr Hanson misled this place and consistently misled this place.

MR BARR: I withdraw, Madam Speaker. Mr Hanson and the truth often depart, Madam Speaker, and—

MADAM SPEAKER: Withdraw, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: I withdraw, Madam Speaker. Mr Hanson struggles with the facts, Madam Speaker, and that was demonstrated in that rant that we just heard: an angry man, a very angry man, who loses control of his emotions in this place, and we see that in the sorts of personal attacks, the rants and the avoidance of the facts and of any of the substantive issues that are before this place this morning.

It is amusing to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about unity tickets on health and education funding. One is reminded of the statement made by the former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, before the 2013 election and before his 2014 budget, when he cut \$30 billion funding from schools:

As far as school funding is concerned, Kevin Rudd and I are on a unity ticket.

I think we have heard before from Liberal leaders what being on a unity ticket means. Before the election it means we will run around saying we are on a unity ticket and pretend to care about those issues, but after the election what do they do? They cut. It is in their DNA. Tony Abbott did it. The former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, did it, and it is exactly what Jeremy Hanson would do.

He then raises a point around the commonwealth public service. It is probably worth reminding the Leader of the Opposition that when the Rudd government was elected in 2007 there were 155,091 public servants. When the Rudd government was defeated at the 2013 election there were 166,153 public servants. Eleven thousand additional positions were created over that period of government from 2007 to 2013. After that period of government, when the former Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, was elected and Joe Hockey, the former Treasurer, brought down that infamous 2014 budget, that was the point in time when the commonwealth public service began to shrink.

In this year's budget we see confirmation of further savage cuts to our city's national cultural institutions. The National Gallery, the National Library, which Senator Seselja is on the board of, and the National Film and Sound Archive have all been

savaged, losing between five and 10 per cent of their staff. How those small institutions are supposed to cope with cuts of that magnitude is beyond the pale. It is very disappointing to see that those small institutions were not exempted from the ongoing efficiency dividends.

Mr Hanson in his speech referred to glowing coverage in the *Canberra Times*. You go to their website and the lead articles are about where the budget pain will be felt in Canberra and about what was the point of the last three years of government. They are the two lead stories on the *Canberra Times* website about the budget. Mr Hanson may wish to cherry-pick one article but the overall perception of the budget for Canberra by most commentators, perhaps all but one, is that we missed out on major infrastructure projects, with the exception of an additional \$7 million for the light rail project.

I did make the point last night, and again on radio this morning, of welcoming that extra \$7 million for the light rail project, and that is a welcome boost for the project and now demonstrates—with \$67 million from the commonwealth, plus the money that the government has raised through the asset recycling initiative on the asset sales themselves—that the \$375 million government capital contribution, paying for more than half of the capital cost of the project through this particular initiative, will easily be achieved. All of those misleading claims that have been made by those opposite in their ideological opposition to public transport provision in this city have proved once again to be false.

Mr Hanson comes into this place and rants and raves, raises the volume, blusters, tries to work his way through by shouting and thinks that is the only way he can get his message through because the substance of his philosophy is out of touch with Canberrans. He leads the most conservative branch of the Liberal Party in this country. He leads a team who occupy the far right of the political spectrum. Canberrans know that. They know that his values and the values of his team are wildly out of touch with the progressive values of this city. We know that. The people of Canberra know that. And it is demonstrated in this place in the sorts of angry contributions that you get time again from a man who fails policy test after policy test, who demonstrates an unfitness for the office of Chief Minister, because all he is reduced to in the end are personal attacks on members of this place, angry shouting, interjections, constant rude interjections on speakers in this place, sometimes even on his own colleagues, and that reflects upon the character of this individual.

He attacks me. He attacks me for having the courage to implement policy reform, to invest more in education, to employ more teachers and to improve the quality of our schools by undertaking a difficult reform process. At least I had the courage to take that on. Compare that to the last Liberal education minister who tried and failed to reform our education system, the former Senator Gary Humphries when he was the education minister in this place.

Mr Hanson: He cut 23 schools, did he?

MR BARR: He tried. Good on him? Right! When Gary Humphries way back in the early 90s attempted to reform the education system, good on him, but when I actually

achieve a reform I am the worst person in the world. Welcome to Jeremy Hanson's world view—so partisan, so angry, so resentful of achievement and reform.

Here we go with his amendment railing against public transport, belying the fact that health and education have been cut significantly by his federal colleagues, ignoring the fact that the national partnership on concessions which provided support to the states and territories to assist low income earners was cut in the 2014 budget. That gap has been filled by my government and will continue to be filled by my government. We are reforming our city's tax system to ensure it is fairer, simpler and more efficient and provides a revenue base to provide health, education and concession services into the future.

He is opposed to that and he will put stamp duty back up. He will put taxes back on insurance duties. He will make life harder for low income Canberrans because that is in his DNA. It is the DNA of the Liberal Party.

The government will not be supporting Mr Hanson's amendment today, and we will continue to focus on what matters for Canberrans: jobs, health and education, community services and high quality municipal services. That has been our focus. That will continue to be our focus, and Mr Hanson can play the angry man in the corner as much as he wants. Bring it on.

Mr Hanson: A personal explanation?

MADAM SPEAKER: Personal explanations are at the end of debate. Standing order 46 is used at the end of debate. Standing order 47 is used if you think you have been misunderstood in something that you said in debate. So standing order 46 at the end, I think.

Mr Hanson: So 47 then?

MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 47 but only if you think that there was something that was misunderstood when you spoke.

MR HANSON: I think so. Under standing order 47, Mr Barr stated that I had made an interjection that—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, that is standing order 46, thanks, Mr Hanson. Can we do that at the end.

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) (11.02): Over the past two years the Canberra community has been hit by fiscal and economic shocks that have been the making of this federal Liberal government. Their cuts to spending and cuts in the number of federal employees were worse than predicted.

The federal Liberal government reduced the territory's expected national health reform agreement funding by about a quarter of a billion dollars over the four years.

The territory's goods and services tax revenue declined by over half a billion dollars over four years after a commonwealth Grants Commission review of relativities.

Last year we saw the commonwealth government introduce the Indigenous advancement strategy. Here in the ACT we received only seven per cent of requested funding through the Indigenous advancement strategy, representing a funding shortfall of some \$6.3 million. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers around the country experienced similar outcomes and expressed widespread confusion and dissatisfaction with the IAS funding process.

The commonwealth's legacy of penny pinching of funding over successive budgets has impacted directly on the ACT government's ability to provide services to Australia's most vulnerable families. A case in point is the cessation of the national partnership Indigenous child development project on 30 June 2014, which had funding tied to the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre for a period of four years. In total \$1.1 million of funding identified for the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre was lost in 2013-14 when the national partnership was terminated.

The end of the national partnership meant cuts in the number of positions available at the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre and this has directly impacted on the government's capacity to deliver child development services and build the resilience of families to support their children. Of the total clients engaged through the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, the vast majority are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The work of the child and family centres in the Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and west Belconnen communities contributes to the fulfilment of the ACT government's vision for all people to reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of an inclusive community. Through the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015-2018 we have taken a whole-of-government commitment to pursuing equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

In the commonwealth government budget, predictably Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lose out again. The abolition of the Indigenous tutorial assistance scheme and the Indigenous support scheme, programs that helped Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education complete their studies, are irresponsible. In my opinion, the most successful initiative that the commonwealth has ever launched in this country in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs was the work that was done in tertiary education, and here we see them cutting in that very area. And we are yet to see how those changes will play out. However, we might think, when we are trying to close the gap, these programs would be essential. Despite the commonwealth's continual effort to cut funding, the ACT government will continue to stand up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans to achieve equitable outcomes.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.06): Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Hanson for moving the amendment. It is interesting that the critique by Mr Barr of Mr Hanson's speech was about how angry he was, yet this is the man who, within minutes of standing up,

was called to order by you not once but twice for saying things that he knew he would be called to order on. But he does that anyway, because that is how the Chief Minister operates.

We have had these debates a number of times. When cuts occur, if they are cuts from the Liberal Party then they are dreadful, it is slash and burn and it is anti-Canberra. But if they are cuts from the Labor Party, that is good economic management. Mr Barr characterised closing 23 schools as “difficult reform”. Goodness me! Go and talk to the communities that you have shut down. Go and ask why it is that in Weston you are now having to put in extra capacity, for instance in Duffy, because you shut the school at Weston Creek.

Of course, the cultural institutions were raised. I think I am the only person in this place who has worked in one of those cultural institutions. In fact, I have worked in two. I set up the shop at Questacon and I then set up the retail arm at the National Library. As we on this side have always said, cuts to the cultural institutions are appalling. But when the Rudd government cut, and particularly savagely cut, funding to the National Gallery of Australia, who was the chief cheerleader for the cuts? Why, it was Andrew Barr. There was a remarkable interview on the ABC the day after that budget when they asked then Senator Lundy whether she could support those cuts in the way that Andrew Barr had supported those cuts, and she said that, no, she could not.

The chief cheerleader for cuts to a cultural institution under his federal colleagues said that it was okay. In fact, he actually said it was good for Canberra because it meant, in terms of the National Gallery, that their travelling exhibition program would cease. Mr Barr said, “That’s good because that means they will have to come to Canberra to see those exhibitions.” That was the logic. That is the twisted logic of this man. He can make all of the snide comments that he wants, but at the end of the day he said that the Rudd cuts were in fact fiscal consolidation. “I have just been sacked; I have been fiscally consolidated by Mr Rudd”!

We know the numbers, because it was revealed in estimates that the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd cuts would culminate in the loss of 14,473 jobs from the Australian public service across Australia. Of course, the bulk of those were in the ACT. The Canberra Liberals stood up regarding those job cuts, but the Australian Labor Party ACT branch, the ACT government, did not. There was not a word from those opposite regarding what their own colleagues did. They are sitting over there shamefaced, looking at their computers, texting and doing all the things you do to avoid the truth. The truth is that the only party that has stood up to federal governments consistently, be they Liberal or Labor, is the Canberra Liberals—whether it was Kate Carnell taking on John Howard or whether it was the Canberra Liberals in recent times under Zed Seselja and Jeremy Hanson taking on Kevin Rudd and Tony Abbott and saying that the cuts were unwarranted and unnecessary.

We are the consistent ones in this argument. We are the ones who have consistently said that we cannot rely forever on the federal government. Yet when you look at the budget papers for Mr Barr’s budget a couple of years back, they said everything would be hunky-dory when commonwealth spending returned to normal levels. That

is his economic strategy: “We’ll let the feds spend our way out of our economic malaise.”

This is all being said at a time when they are cutting the police, and they are now cutting Access Canberra. It has not survived for a year and he is already winding it back because he cannot afford it. So let us talk about your efforts, Mr Barr, Mr Chief Minister. If you want to have any credibility in this space, you need to have a pure record, and you do not.

I think it is a dreadful shame that the cultural institutions are being cut. At the heart of it, under their various acts, most of the cultural institutions have legislated activities that they must carry out under law. They are the things that cannot be cut, largely. It means that things like marketing of the public programs, education, exhibitions, travelling shows—the things that add gloss to the institutions, and which Canberra relies on a great deal—are the things that get cut. I think it is incredibly short sighted. We need a long-term cultural institutions policy about how they are funded, and about the cultural institutions that are missing from the national landscape that could be put in place here in the ACT. And this is where they should be, except perhaps for the National Maritime Museum. It is hard to get an Oberon class submarine and a destroyer to the ACT. Ideally, Sydney Cove or Sydney Harbour is a great place for that.

The cultural institutions are important to the national psyche, and I would have thought that in Malcolm Turnbull’s creative and agile world the arts in this way would have been bolstered. I think it is a shame, and I have made those comments known to my colleagues on the hill.

It is very important that we get it right for Canberra. My understanding is that, according to budget paper No 3, with respect to total payments to the states in 2015-16, the ACT received from the commonwealth \$1.845 billion. In 2016-17, in the coming year, it will go up to \$2.067 billion. That is an increase of \$222 million, or about 12 per cent. With respect to commonwealth payments to the states, on page 6 of budget paper No 3, it would appear that it goes from \$1.8 billion to \$2 billion—a 12 per cent increase. In tough times, and having regard to the budget situation and priorities, that is a number that people should be welcoming.

There are other flow-ons. Certainly, with respect to the defence spend, we have often talked about not silicon valley but khaki valley, whereby defence tech is situated here in the ACT. That is certainly something that I have spoken about on many occasions and will continue to do so. As early as 2004 we said that innovation and the arts were the path to the future in our creative Canberra policy. Defence was one of those industries that featured 12 years ago. It should feature now and it should feature well into the future.

Clearly, when the ATO undertake big changes, as they will have to do having regard to the administration of company tax and superannuation, that tends to mean an increase in staff. You can look at the glory days of the introduction of the GST, which saw a huge increase in staffing in the ATO. So there is potentially a plus there as well.

The budget is not all beer and skittles, and I do not think anybody has said that it is. But if you drill down into it, there is a lot that we can be grateful for. The large-scale cutting of the public service that happened under John Howard in 1996, that happened under Kevin Rudd and that was continued by Tony Abbott, is not there. We have settled onto a more solid base, and that must be welcomed. If you will not at least acknowledge that, I think it is a pretty poor analysis.

It is appropriate to look at what the ACT government has done. For all his critiquing, we never once heard in Mr Barr's speech how he had closed 23 schools, how he was cutting jobs from Access Canberra even as we speak, how his cuts have caused job losses in the AFP in the ACT. What about the sanctimonious nature of cutting health funding at a time when 60 beds disappeared overnight from the University of Canberra public hospital? Indeed the definition of "beds" included hydrotherapy pools, couches, armchairs and waiting room chairs. It is a pretty poor critique when you drill down and find that your health minister does not have a handle on it and that he can blithely walk away from what he committed to do.

You should not throw stones if you live in a glass house. That is wise advice. This government has suffered from its own hubris. The people of the ACT have suffered from that hubris for way too long. The reality is that there is only one party in this place that consistently stands up for the ACT and takes on all comers, and that is the Canberra Liberals. We have always done it; we will always do it. We put the people of the ACT first, and we will continue to do so.

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) (11.15): I am pleased to speak on this motion put forward by Mr Hinder today and also on the amendment that has been put forward by Mr Hanson. I do not know whether Mr Hanson and I were watching the same budget being handed down last night, but I am happy to break down for Mr Hanson this morning what this budget means for young people in the ACT.

As minister for youth, I believe it is our responsibility, and the responsibility of our government, to look out for all low income Canberrans. I believe it should be the responsibility of our federal government to do the same for all Australians. But this budget seems to have been designed specifically to ensure that the brunt is felt by Australia and Canberra's young people.

Treasurer Morrison included in his first budget a wind-back from his government's commitment at the last election to match Canberra's Gonski funding. This decision will make it harder for vulnerable young Canberrans to get the leg-up that they need in our local schools. He then made cuts to our local universities that leave our institutions with no choice but to raise fees through flagship courses that will do nothing but create a two-tier education system and make it harder for young people to get qualified. Maybe these cuts to education will not be felt by the people that Mr Hanson knows, but I can tell him that they will be felt throughout our community.

Shockingly, Treasurer Morrison has included an internship scheme that he refers to as “real jobs and real experience”. I know there are many issues on which Mr Morrison and I do not see eye to eye, but I cannot believe that he would want to see young people he cares about working for \$4 an hour. It is definitely not the future that I would want for my children, and it is not the future that I would want for the children who live and are growing up here in the ACT. This creates a farcical situation that opens up vulnerable young people to be exploited even more.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Wall, can you—

Mr Gentleman: A point of order.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Gentleman.

Mr Gentleman: Madam Deputy Speaker, Mr Wall keeps interjecting while the minister is speaking.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was about to make that point. Mr Wall, please, no interjections across the room. Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, this creates a farcical situation that will open up young people in our community to even further exploitation. All young people—in fact all workers—require on-the-job training. This program that was announced last night does nothing more than insert more instability and more uncertainty into the lives of young people who are trying to get their first foothold on the employment ladder, and it is all paid for by the Australian taxpayer.

Treasurer Morrison seemed to believe last night that this program would create more work for young Australians. I do not know how he came to that conclusion. This program pays businesses \$1,000 to put on interns without incurring any costs to themselves, and with no requirement for formal on-the-job training. Far from creating jobs, this program creates an incentive for young people to do work for a taxpayer-funded \$4 that would otherwise need to be done by a fully paid worker. If businesses are being offered the choice of employing a young person for \$4 or employing them on the minimum wage of \$17, and to be paid \$1,000 to employ the young person for \$4, that creates the opportunity for even more young people to become unemployed and to be employed under this farcical employment program that the federal Treasurer called the “real work for the dole” scheme. It is a program that does nothing but cut off opportunity for full-time work for the young people who need it most in our community and across Australia.

Finally, after the Treasurer announced programs that make it harder for young people to get qualified and even harder for them to get a job, he then decided to make it harder for those young people who do make it through by refusing to undertake tax reform that would make it possible for them to get an affordable house.

All of this would be bad enough, but to add to it all the budget indicates that there is no intention to continue the national partnership agreement on housing beyond 2017, placing further holes in the safety net for those young people who slip off the Treasurer's already slippery ladder of opportunity.

I know Mr Hanson and his team have spent no time in government and might find the complexity of our funding arrangements challenging, but it is really pretty simple. When your federal colleagues do not meet their education funding commitments, part of that impact is felt right here in Canberra. When they refuse to take action on housing, it affects our housing market, and when they make it harder for young people to get a job, it means our young people are missing out.

Like my colleague Mr Hinder, I look forward to the Canberra Liberals figuring out this connection and calling on their federal colleagues to stop attacking this city. It is important to note that this motion brought forward today by Mr Hinder calls on the government to continue doing the great work that we are doing, and to provide support for low income Canberrans, including through the ACT concessions program, and to continue to provide high quality health, education and community services for the Canberra community. As I said, we welcome the commitments from the opposition leader, Bill Shorten, and the federal Labor Party to resource the full Gonski needs-based funding model for all Australian schools.

As I have said previously in this place, I am encouraged by the federal opposition leader's announcements about the conversation that needs to be had on negative gearing and on the capital gains tax. That alone will not provide the solutions that we need regarding affordable housing across Australia, but it is certainly a bold step and a bold conversation that needs to be had. It can contribute to providing an opportunity for our young people and for people on low incomes to be able to afford to get into homes of their own.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank Mr Hinder for bringing this motion to the Assembly so that we can have this conversation today.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.23): It is no surprise, no surprise at all, that a federal coalition government brings down a budget that brings great benefit to many parts of the country—and also to the ACT community, it should be noted. But members opposite always manage to find the negative in the message. They always manage to find a negative.

They do not even understand it. We heard Ms Berry's anecdote about the youth employment program that was announced by the federal Treasurer last night. She said that they need real jobs. The internships program that was announced last night provides an opportunity for young people who have been struggling to get employment, to be taken on board by a business to learn skills, to be trained, and to be given the opportunity to prove their worth in the hope that they will be more job-ready in the future.

I couple that with the tax changes that have been announced for small business. Reducing the company tax rate for small businesses to 27.5 per cent and increasing the turnover limit to \$10 million mean that more small businesses in this country are now on the lower tax rate. This means that they are going to have the opportunity to think about hiring new staff, making new investments, innovating in new areas.

These are what the drivers are going to be of our economy in the future. Rest assured, Madam Deputy Speaker: in June, in the next sitting period, when the Chief Minister and Treasurer stands up in this place, he will undoubtedly have found a way to take that tax concession and more away from local businesses in this city. Rest assured!

The federal government has taken some lead out of their saddlebags to let them go forth and do what they do best: innovate, create jobs and create opportunity. But Mr Barr will be standing there with weight to put back in those saddlebags. Rest assured; be it a rates increase, be it an increase in licence and registration fees, be it an increase in vehicle rego, Mr Barr will undoubtedly find a way to make business in this city struggle.

He has done it year on year on year. It counters all the good work that is being done at the federal level. I hear so many local businesses say, "I am moving to Queanbeyan because it is more effective for me to be operating over the border than it is to be in the ACT." That is a sad indictment of the Chief Minister and Treasurer and no-one else.

Do not blame the federal government. They are controlling the settings across the country. If there are businesses leaving Australia, that is a federal issue. When they are leaving our city, the Chief Minister and Treasurer, being one and the same, is the one person who is wholly and solely responsible.

I look forward to local businesses that have been relieved of this taxation burden spreading their wings and then taking the opportunity of other initiatives that were announced in the budget last night, like the internship program for young people; 120,000 jobs across the country are likely to be created off this initiative. That offers the opportunity for those that have been long-term unemployed and who are stuck on Newstart or allowances to be given a boost by participating in the scheme. I think the federal Treasurer announced last night an extra \$200.

Canberra is an expensive place to live. It is even tougher if you are on a welfare benefit. But to be given the opportunity to learn some skills in a trade or an industry and to be paid an extra \$200 a week for the privilege I think is a good initiative to make it that little bit easier for these people to get ahead and get a start in life.

To recognise the contribution that businesses make and to share the risk, the federal government is going to help those businesses that participate in the scheme by paying \$1,000 to cover some of the costs associated with covering the insurances, the training and the investment that they will make in giving young people a start and developing skills for the future.

It is poignant to note that those opposite have constantly been talking about the cuts, the cuts, the cuts. What they are talking about is promised funding commitments from their former government under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years that were uncosted and unfunded. They are saying, "Now that we are not getting the money that was hypothesised, there has been a cut." Rest assured, Madam Deputy Speaker; Senator Seselja, to his credit, has done some great work up on the hill. His press release this morning says:

Education and Health funding for the ACT has also received a significant boost with increases of \$66m and \$95m respectively over the forward estimates.

Those funds are as good as in the bank. Once the budget passes, the ACT will be in a better position because of additional commonwealth funding in the sectors of health and education. It is not a furphy. It is not a magic pudding. It is something off in the never-never. It is money in the budget to help support health and education in this territory.

I would urge members on the other side to take a look in the mirror, spot the positives in this, speak up our local economy, speak up our country, talk up our country, give those that are trying to do the hard work some credit and get on with the job of making Canberra a better place.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.29): I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Mr Hinder's motion, particularly about education, but also about the health spending he refers to and issues around concessions. I will also reflect on last night's budget, as members have done through the course of today's debate.

They say that budgets are about choices. I think it is quite clear from last night's budget that we see the choices this federal government is making laid out very clearly for us on the table. It is clear that they are happy to go down the path of unsustainable tax cuts for businesses and higher income earners at the expense of generating the necessary revenue for schools, for dental care, for health care and higher education. That is what we saw out of last night's budget. It is a prioritisation away from the essential services for our community and towards providing tax cuts to the people who least need them. That, I think, is the indictment of last night's budget.

There were plenty of other details, but when it comes to the big picture, that is actually what it is about. It was a fascinating budget speech to watch last night. We saw a plan on defence; we saw a plan on small business; but there was not a single mention by the Treasurer of climate change and the need to transition to a clean energy economy. There was no mention of domestic violence, perhaps one of the key issues of public debate in this country at the moment in terms of government needing to respond to a difficult social issue that afflicts our community on a daily basis. These are the sorts of things we saw. We saw that the government is willing to continue to pour hundreds of millions of dollars into inhumane prison camps in places like Nauru and Manus Island. That is where they are prepared to spend their money. They are the sorts of priorities we saw in last night's budget.

For a better prioritisation, at 8 o'clock tonight Greens Senator Richard Di Natale will provide the Greens budget response. I think in that we will see a much better articulation of what a fair and sustainable Australia looks like. I would encourage people who have the opportunity to listen to that speech tonight because I think we will see there a true indication of what a fair and sustainable budget would be and a reflection of certainly the kind of priorities that the Greens think are much more important than what we saw in last night's budget.

Mr Hanson said today that he found an article about how great the budget was for the ACT. Like the Chief Minister, I read the whole *Canberra Times* website, not just the bits that suited me. It is interesting to see the first line of Tom McElroy's article, which says:

The ACT is a loser from Treasurer Scott Morrison's first federal budget, as the absence of marginal seats and pressure on the public service have resulted in few funding commitments.

Let us not cherrypick the articles that suit us. Read the whole paper and actually get a sense of the analysis out there. What we saw last night from a local perspective was further cuts to our cultural institutions. We are already seeing the removal of programs, the loss of opportunities, the reduction of outreach into the community, which is what these cultural institutions are supposed to do.

Last night we saw a further 63 full-time equivalent positions removed from our vital cultural institutions. That has an impact locally in terms of the loss of jobs and the impact on those people who are citizens of our fair city. But it has an impact right across Australia because so many people come here to visit our cultural institutions. They are Australian institutions, not Canberra institutions. We have seen a further downgrading of their capability to deliver the programs that they should.

That will also mean a lack of outreach into the broader Australian community, because it means that things like their travelling roadshows and the other programs that they run will be the first things to go when it comes to having to find the sort of savings that have been put on them. Again, if one looks a bit further through the internet reports, the ABC website talked about the public sector being a loser, with a further increase in the efficiency dividend. That will also impact in Canberra in a range of different ways.

One of the positives in last night's budget for Canberra was a small increase in the funding for light rail. It is quite interesting to see that the Liberal government continues to support that project in Canberra. I am pleased that they continue to do that despite the opposition of their local colleagues. Of course, it is because they recognise the value of these kinds of projects. There is no greater recognition than putting your money where your mouth is, and that is what the federal government continues to do.

In terms of priorities, last night's budget says a lot about the way a government makes choices about what goes into a budget. The Australian aid budget, after a further

\$224 million of cuts in 2016-17, will be at an all-time low of 0.22 per cent of Australia's gross national product. Comparing that to the global goals that are in place, Australia is already well below where it should be. What we have seen last night is a further cut in global aid through our foreign aid budget. If anyone thinks that is not relevant here in the ACT, it is. Australia's spending overseas has far-reaching ramifications. It is an important long-term contribution to stability in our region, to helping our neighbours, to being a decent developed nation, and we have seen further cuts last night.

Of course, we saw the \$160 million provisioned for a marriage equality plebiscite. If ever we wanted to talk about where money might come from for more important causes, let us talk about that. We know what the Australian community thinks. It is time the Australian parliament stood up and acted and did not provide that sort of money for something that, frankly, the parliament should be taking a decision on.

Let me take a moment to focus on education specifically. I am concerned by what we have seen last night. It has been framed as a boost to the education sector, but what we know is that it is in fact a wind-down from money that had been stated for education into the future. The reality is that an increase on a cut is still a cut.

We are still in a position where the ACT will be worse-off than what had previously been identified under the full Gonski funding package by the previous government. Mr Hanson has come in here today and said, "It is all about allocated dollars in the budget." But what we know is there was a clear indication that that is the money that would be made available over the six-year funding arrangement of the Gonski package to fund schools in Australia.

Mr Hanson says, "It is not allocated dollars in the budget." I could stand here and make the same comment about the small business package that was delivered in last night's budget. If you want to play it that way, let us be honest, and let us compare apples with apples. If it is apples with apples, that education funding was there just as those small business cuts are there. Let us make sure that if we are going to try to cherrypick in this debate we do it with some degree of integrity. It is quite clear that that money was allocated for schools under a funding package that, if I recall correctly, at the last election, actually was—what was the term that Mr Hanson used today?—a unity ticket.

There was a unity ticket on that funding. Yet it is gone; it is gone. We have seen a little bit clawed back in this budget, and that is a welcome thing. But let us not come here crowing about it, because it is still a shameful exercise in winding back the most serious commitment we have seen to education funding in this country, particularly in the context of having made a breakthrough.

I think the most attractive thing about the Gonski funding approach, and the thing that was commonly accepted in our community, was that it got us out of that debate about who got what, the constant bickering about who got which bits of the pie. It actually got us to a genuine needs-based education funding system, which was in the interests of students. That is the thing we should be focused on.

I am dismayed that we continue to see the federal government walk away from that in what was widely accepted as being a real breakthrough for education funding in this country. There is no unity ticket on this issue. Anyone who comes in here and says so is again cherrypicking their arguments for their own political purposes.

What is particularly concerning about the education announcement we saw on the weekend from the minister, Simon Birmingham, is that the federal government has linked ongoing funding to the implementation of a reform agenda for education, a reform agenda that has been released without consultation with the states and territories or with schools. The first I heard of it, as the education minister, was in the radio news on Sunday morning. There was a series of new conditions being attached to the education funding. As you would imagine, I immediately contacted the directorate to find out the details. The directorate had not been advised of those details.

What we have seen is that there will be new conditions attached to our education funding which we have not been consulted on and which we do not know the full details of. Now that we are going into caretaker mode after the Prime Minister takes the drive down to see the Governor-General on Friday, heaven alone knows how we are going to finalise those details with the commonwealth government in caretaker mode.

But certainly I will be discussing these reforms and the funding issues with the local public, independent and Catholic school stakeholders, with the Australian Education Union and with the various people who understand this well, all of whom celebrated the Gonski funding model, knowing that this was an intellectually sound, fair and sensible way to proceed with education funding in Australia.

I will certainly continue to advocate on behalf of this government, because it is an item of the 2012 Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement. Both our parties recognised that this is a way to proceed. I will continue to advocate on behalf of this government and this community for that education funding model to be restored.

It is worth noting that the Greens have always stood by that position. I am very pleased to see that the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, has also adopted that position as the Labor Party position for the federal election. We know that that is what the community supports and we know it will deliver the best outcomes for our students.

I will not be supporting Mr Hanson's amendment today. I do not think he expected anybody to support it in the way it is written. I do not think he honestly anticipated that. Some of the very points of it, particularly his continued refusal to accept the need to invest seriously in quality public transport in this town, mean that I cannot support this amendment.

I encourage people to tune in at 8 o'clock tonight when Senator Richard Di Natale, the leader of the Australian Greens, gives his response to the federal budget, to hear how a truly fair and sustainable budget would be framed.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (11.41): I thank Mr Hinder for his motion today. It is a very important time for Canberrans to reflect on this federal budget and the impact it is going to have on the territory.

In 2013 I was proud to be part of the government which signed up to the Gonski plan to help improve education in this country. The funding provided by the federal Labor government for the Gonski plan was designed to make sure that all children who go through our school system have the right resources, support and learning materials to achieve the best outcomes that they can.

The funding was going to enable a reduction in the size of classes and therefore provide more teacher-student contact in the classroom; more employment for additional specialist teachers who are best trained and able to help students who may be falling a little behind in numeracy or literacy; more provision for support for kids with special needs or behavioural issues; and help for teachers who do the best job they can through additional training and support.

I noticed that in the conversation earlier on Mr Hanson said that the Gonski budget funding was not there. I can assure Mr Hanson that Gonski was funded by Labor in the 2013-14 budget. My office is very happy to send the link to that section of the budget to his office in an email if he requires that. It was an important time in our history—Madam Deputy Speaker, you were there at the time—when we were looking at the importance of providing the best possible education for all Australians, particularly those of us in the ACT wanting the best outcomes for our kids. The governments of Mr Abbott and Mr Turnbull have gutted this program. The federal government seems unable to keep the vast majority of the promises that it made in the 2013 election. It is a disgrace.

On health, I remember very clearly when Gough Whitlam introduced Medicare into this country. It was a fantastic reform which has now helped millions of Australians to receive the health care to which they are entitled. This is one of the defining reforms of the 21st century, especially for the outcomes that are provided for Australians right across the board. I would like to take note, and we should ask the Assembly to take note, that the Liberal Party voted against this legislation in 1974. It is important that we look at the history of where Liberals, and Canberra Liberals, vote against legislation which helps the community as a whole, in education, health care and the like.

When Mr Abbott declared in 2013 that the coalition government would not undertake to cut health care in this country, I was a bit dubious. Unfortunately, my suspicions of dishonesty were well founded. Not far from a year after he made the promise, which is noted in the motion, the thought bubble of the \$7 GP co-payment was raised. Mr Abbott's \$7 bill was and remains a clear contradiction of his promise of no cuts to health.

The federal Liberal Party are still doing their best to break this promise in as many ways as possible. Their current plan to cut funding for free pap smears and other pathology services represents an absurd piece of badly thought out policy which will have an awfully detrimental effect on the health of Australians, particularly women. A higher cost of medical procedures designed to detect developing issues early on will mean that fewer people will get tested and fewer people will find problems of disease which may be beginning to develop. So fewer people will have the ability to get tested and therefore there will be those concerns which may see diseases developing later on. This leads to a higher incidence of people detecting these issues later on when the treatment is more expensive, is more dangerous and has a lower success rate. Already each year over 800 Australian women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and around a third of those women are likely to die from the disease. This policy from the federal coalition would work to make this situation worse. The policy is a disgrace, and the Liberals should be ashamed of themselves.

The coalition did not even have the good sense or decency to talk to experts in the field about the proposed policy. As the Australian Medical Association president, Brian Owler, put it earlier this year:

When they—

the government—

make these announcements, just like the co-payments, they don't talk to anyone ... They don't talk to pathologists, they don't talk to doctors, they just make these announcements and then they wonder why everyone gets upset.

Those on this side of the Assembly understand why people get upset. On this side we understand. I am dubious about whether those on the other side understand.

This government is doing the best job possible to try to reverse the effects of these various cuts by the federal government, including cuts to concessions. The support this government provides to lower income Canberrans in health, education and community services, and through the ACT concessions program, helps us to move towards a more equitable community with better outcomes for all.

Some of this support for low income Canberrans can be seen through the reforms that have been implemented during my time as Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. The changes that have been made by this government to public holidays provide low paid workers in particular with the penalty rates they are entitled to on those significant days. Additionally, the portable long service leave bill which passed yesterday, with support from this side of the house but without support from the Canberra Liberals, will provide better work-life balance and social outcomes for some of the lowest paid and hardest working members of our community.

We know that aged care and waste workers are the hardest workers in the ACT and, of course, some of the most vulnerable, with very low incomes: \$43,000, as I said yesterday, for workers in the aged care industry. We know that having a good

work-life balance can be challenging for many of those people. It is one of the factors which impacts on health and the quality of life. Providing that extended break from work once every five years is really important, as I said yesterday.

I want to reiterate that this government does support low paid workers and those vulnerable in the territory. I will talk on Mr Hanson's amendment. In clause 2(c) he asks for "better support for low income Canberrans". That is what this government does. It does go out and provide better outcomes for low income Canberrans—quite contrary to the Canberra Liberals, who voted against this yesterday. It is pleasing to see that more than 5,900 of these low paid workers will have a better work-life balance and better outcomes due to the policy of this government.

The Liberal Party have broken a large number of promises. They have no mind for supporting the most vulnerable in our community or for developing sensible policy in general. I am glad to say that the ACT government represents the opposite of this shambles.

Mr Smyth, in his address, acknowledged the attacks by his Liberal mates in the John Howard government era, attacks on our Canberra workers. I remember it well. I was working for the department of admin services at the time, at the printing office. Whole departments were erased, including the whole department of admin services. We saw departure lounges created for government workers to try to spend some time to search for new jobs. Those were set up at the printing office as well.

We saw the extraordinary situation where Comcar drivers were terminated. The precision and policy they used were quite extraordinary. They were asked to drive to the printing office to be addressed by a particular officer, with no idea what was going on. They drove their Comcar car to the printing office. They were escorted into a room and faced by a single person, who simply said, "Here's your cheque and your Cabcharge; you are now terminated." Out of all of the Comcar drivers that we had here in the ACT—130, I think it was at the time—the Liberal Party terminated all bar three. It was a shameful process.

The Liberal Party does have history on its side on job cuts for the federal public service. That continues. It continues in this budget as well. We know it is in their DNA. The ACT government will stand up for our workers in the territory, contrary to what the Liberal Party does.

Question put:

That **Mr Hanson's** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones

Ms Lawder
Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Noes 9

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Mr Hinder
Mr Rattenbury

Question so resolved in the negative.

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (11.55): I move the amendment that has been circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- “(a) the former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott MP, promised in 2013 that there would be ‘no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, and no cuts to the ABC or SBS’;
- (b) in its 2014 Budget, the Abbott Government cut funding to education, health, concessions for pensioner concession card and seniors card holders, the ABC and SBS;
- (c) the Turnbull Government has refused to reinstate the full amount of funding cut from education, health and concessions;
- (d) the Commonwealth views repairing its budget as more important than funding health, education and important concessions for pensioners and seniors;
- (e) the ACT Government has filled the shortfall in funding caused by the Commonwealth’s axing of the ‘National Partnership Agreement on Certain Concessions for Pensioner Concession Card and Seniors Card Holders’;
- (f) the Commonwealth has shifted the responsibility for funding this concession directly back on to States and Territories; and
- (g) the 2016-2017 Commonwealth Budget has imposed increased efficiency dividends on the Australian Public Service; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) continue to provide support for low-income Canberrans, including through the ACT Concessions Program;
- (b) continue to provide high quality health, education and community services for the Canberra community;
- (c) welcome any commitments made to resource the full Gonski needs-based funding model for Australia’s schools;
- (d) condemn the increased efficiency dividends imposed on the Australian Public Service by the Federal Liberal Government in the 2016-2017 Commonwealth Budget; and
- (e) continue to support the ACT economy in light of the impact caused by the ongoing cuts to the Australian Public Service.”.

The amendment omits all words after “That this Assembly”. I draw the attention of all members opposite to clause (g). I draw their attention to the fact that it is simply an omit and change. I thought it was easy for those opposite to understand but clearly I have been proven wrong. Under “notes” there is a new clause (g):

The 2016-17 Commonwealth Budget has imposed increased efficiency dividends on the Australian Public Service ...

There are two additional clauses under (2) which call on the government to:

- (d) condemn the increased efficiency dividends imposed on the Australian Public Service by the Federal Liberal Government in the 2016-17 Commonwealth Budget; and
- (e) continue to support the ACT economy in light of the impact caused by the ongoing cuts to the Australian Public Service.

As anyone in the admin and procedure committee would know, Mr Hinder’s motion was submitted before 12 o’clock, as is the norm. Last night the Australian community got to see for the first time what the federal liberal government has in mind for our society. So extreme were some of the elements in that budget, I felt it necessary and those on this side felt it necessary to bring these amendments to the Assembly.

What we saw last night will affect Canberra public servants and will affect Canberra families. Everyone on that side can dismiss the impact on the Australian public service, the families here, our neighbours. Every time you go to Cooleman Court and park your car or you have a mobile office, a member of the Australian public service will come and talk to you. And when they come and talk to me I will say that you laughed at their job cuts. That is what you are doing. You are laughing and dismissing the impact—

Mr Wall: There are public servants that still have a job.

MS BURCH: Mr Wall says if you are a public servant you still have got a job. Say that to the 11,000 who no longer have a job courtesy of the coalition, and the others who will lose their job courtesy of you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Address the chair, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Stop the clock, please, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I have no intention of stopping the clock. I asked you to address the chair.

MS BURCH: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I thought you asked me to sit in my chair. I do apologise.

The Chief Minister has already pointed out that there were 11,000 positions gained through the Labor government and that the losses have been under the coalition

government. We are already hurting from savage cuts of the liberal government. We thought that this was going to be the last of these cuts. But, true to form, there is no truth from those in the federal Liberal government. As we have heard, the unity ticket was torn up and thrown away and any notion that any cuts to the Australian public service here in Canberra would be eased is purely and absolutely a nonsense.

The efficiency dividend imposed on the APS has increased. This will hurt agencies and their ability to deliver services and indeed we will see jobs cut. Modelling by ACT Treasury shows 1,400 Canberra-based Australian public service staff will lose their jobs.

Through you, Madam Speaker, Mr Wall dismisses that, smiles at it, smirks at it, laughs at it. For those 1,400 families of individuals who will lose their job, that is the response that we get from those opposite. And of course the great supporter of small business will also understand that the 1,400 jobs lost will affect not only those individuals and their families but also the businesses and small businesses supported by those families. As the Chief Minister said last night, this budget is breathtaking hypocrisy.

The Liberals claim that this budget is a budget for growth but in the so-called efficiency dividends and cuts to national institutions we see more than a thousand Canberrans lose their jobs. It is pretty hard for Canberra small business to grow when the Liberals keep on sacking their customers. They have broken their word to Canberrans after the previous Prime Minister assured the Chief Minister that the cuts were over. Unsurprisingly they have done nothing to plug the gaping holes that have been left in our schools and our hospitals.

Mr Hanson, through you, Madam Speaker, came in here and said the *Canberra Times* was all for the budget. I am looking at a headline “Federal budget 2016: Pain for ACT as national institutions see jobs go”. That is not a good headline. I do not think that is a positive headline that Mr Hanson should be proud of. The article says:

The ACT is a loser from Treasurer Scott Morrison’s first federal budget.

The budget papers suggest the workforce of Canberra’s national cultural institutions will drop by about 63 full-time equivalent positions ... with the National Library ... losing 28 positions in a move blamed in part on a decline in revenue from external sources.

The government will save nearly \$2 billion from its efficiency dividend.

The federal Liberal Party, supported by those opposite, want to save \$2 billion off the back of Canberra families. This article goes on to say that the National Gallery’s workforce will drop and that the National Portrait Gallery will see fewer jobs. It also goes on to say:

In March, the government revealed national institutions would be forced to deliver nearly \$40 million of savings within four years, above earlier federal budget cuts. ...

The staffing cuts, an effect of the efficiency dividend and other economy drives in the public service, disproportionately impact Canberra's institutions and other government agencies.

That has a disproportionate negative impact on Canberra and Canberra families.

Another article—and I am sure Mr Hanson must have a blind spot on some of those headings—headed “Budget 2016: No respite from hard times for public service” says:

Scott Morrison's first budget offers no respite for the Australian Public Service, with more cuts, few new jobs and greater efficiencies demanded as the Coalition strives to “transform government”.

It is transforming it but I do not think for the better. It goes on to say that the coalition can see a time when there is little left to cut from the public service. Your federal counterparts are cutting and cutting and cutting until, the article concludes, “by 2019-20 the government anticipates there is little meat left on the bone”. They are your federal colleagues. That is what you smirk and laugh about when you see the impact the federal Liberals will have on Canberra families.

There is another article in the *Canberra Times*. I think the Chief Minister has referred to it. Leigh Sales on ABC last night asked, “What was the point of your three years in government and why should the voters re-elect you?” That is telling. And I will say when I am out in mobile offices over the next five months, “Why should the ACT voters vote for the Canberra Liberals who are combating, with smirk and laughter, the 1,400 job cuts to Canberra families.”

Mr Hanson then went on to say that we are just doing this as a political game and asked, “What connection do the Canberra Liberals have indeed to the federal Liberals?” It made me think of a couple of items that I have brought here that clearly show that these two are very connected. So any attitude of the federal Liberals is reflected in the Canberra Liberals. I brought a motion back in September of last year around child care and Ms Lawder at the time brought in an amendment to my motion spruiking the federal government's community support program. Over there, they spruik and back in everything that the fed Liberals do. Unfortunately for Ms Lawder at the time, (1) she got it wrong, the program had been disconnected; and (2) no Canberra-based childcare services were eligible. In fact—and I do not have the figures in front of me—there were hundreds of thousands of dollars ripped out of early education childcare centres backed in and encouraged by the Canberra Liberals.

Let us talk about Gonski funding. Yes, there is money in this budget. Not enough. Nowhere near enough. But, again, I have brought to this place motions asking this Assembly to seek full funding, yes for government schools but importantly for nongovernment schools that are disproportionately affected by the non-funding of the Gonski formula in the ACT. Those opposite, led by Mr Hanson and Mr Doszpot, voted that motion down because they did not want to upset the federal Liberals.

When we look at the tax cut that everyone over on that side is saying is a good thing—(*Time expired.*)

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (12.07): I am not really sure that the amendment adds significant worth or value to the motion. It is a little unfortunate that Mr Hinder is having his work cleaned up by Ms Burch. He can reflect on that and whether the Labor Party needs to move amendments to their own motions to try to clean them up after I have spoken. I cannot imagine that Mr Hinder is overly excited about that.

But I just thought I would respond briefly because Ms Burch is talking about job cuts. She would know about that because Mr Barr recently cut her job and cut the job of one staffer in her office. When it comes to job cuts Ms Burch is an expert. She also would be an expert because she is the person that has cut jobs in ACT Policing. When she was the police minister Ms Burch cut \$15 million of funding out of the ACT budget for ACT Policing. That has eventuated in over a dozen job cuts last financial year, with more to come.

We have the hypocrisy of someone standing up in this place talking about job cuts, when jobs have been cut in their own office, and that they have by their own actions cut jobs in one of their portfolio areas, ACT Policing, which we know is under enormous strain when dealing with issues like domestic violence, issues like ice, issues like the increasing amount of bikie activity that we have in this town and indeed the increase in size of our population. If you are going to stand up and move amendments to your own members' motions and ramble on about jobs, it is worth reflecting on what you have done personally to look after jobs in the ACT. If you are the minister that has cut jobs, then I think that is, we could say, leading with your chin.

I do not know if that was a bit of a bid to try to reclaim her job if she is re-elected, try to stake a claim to be a minister if Labor were to be re-elected—and we can all shudder when it comes to that—but I remind members that when it comes to funding, when it comes to support of education, Ms Burch is the minister who presided over one of the most disgraceful things that we have seen in this town where a young autistic boy was locked in a cage. That is the school system that Ms Burch presided over. That is the school system Ms Burch administered: overcrowded schools, maintenance of schools which is not up to speed, and an autistic boy locked in a cage under Ms Burch's watch. In police she cut funding that cost jobs and in her education portfolio she administered that portfolio to a point where autistic children were being locked in cages. And she has the audacity to stand up and provide a critique in this place.

On a substantive issue—and I think this is one that we need to be alive to—there is \$65 million extra funding for education between this financial year and next financial year in the budget, and I welcome that. There is talk about Gonski funding. We certainly, as I said before in my speech, want to see increased funding for health and education and indeed anything else from the federal government. There is an increase in funding, from my reading of the papers, of \$222 million between this year and next year in the budget. I welcome that. That is an increase of 12 per cent.

But when the Gonski funding model was introduced, because of the fact that Gonski funding is needs based and follows the need, that actually resulted in a \$30 million

reduction in funding for the ACT. When comparing the special purpose payments that were embedded in the ACT budget with the Gonski funding as it was previously announced a few years ago, it showed that Gonski actually led to a reduction in money coming from the federal government into the ACT.

Yes, I actually do support the calls for as much education funding as we can get into the ACT. The principles of Gonski I think are good ones. I think they are good ones globally across Australia. But let us be very mindful that what we do not want is what happened last time, and that was a reduction in funding. Under the agreement signed by Ms Katy Gallagher, the then Chief Minister, and Ms Julia Gillard, the then Prime Minister, the net result in the budget was a \$30 million reduction.

I am not saying that in any sense I do not support increased funding or that we do not understand the principles of Gonski, which is needs based, but let us just be aware of what the implications would be for the ACT because I do not want the rhetoric to get in the way of an increase in funding for our schools here in the ACT. I do not support any reduction in funding for the ACT school system as occurred previously under ACT Labor when ACT Labor, through the deal that they signed with Ms Gillard, actually cut \$30 million in funding from ACT schools.

Whether we support the amendment or not is a little academic. We will not be supporting the motion given it has not been amended. I do remind members that when we do actually throw around labels like “Gonski” or “NDIS” and so on—and I do welcome the extra money that is coming in the federal budget for NDIS—we do need to look at the detail. We want to make sure that we get additional funding where the funding is needed. But I do not support that if, as happened the last time, it would result in a reduction in funding to the ACT.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (12.14): I thank Ms Burch for bringing forward the extra points in this amendment. It is important for the motion to be updated to reflect the fact that last night’s commonwealth budget imposed further efficiency dividends on the Australian public service and that the cumulative effect in the past of those efficiency dividends has been that a lot of the immediate and obvious savings that could be achieved within agencies have been achieved some time ago—many budgets ago—and that the impact of efficiency dividends now, particularly on the smaller national institutions, can only translate into the loss of jobs. The ACT Treasury has estimated that over the next three years to be around 1,400, based upon previous experience and an understanding of what little discretionary spending is left available for those agencies.

It is also important to take the opportunity today for this place to express a view on that. We heard from the shadow treasurer earlier that he is as pure as the driven snow when it comes to expressing a view on these things, so we look forward to his vote in this place shortly.

Ms Burch’s amendment also calls on the ACT government to continue to support the territory economy in light of the impact of the federal budget last night. We can and will take up that challenge in our budget next month.

I do need to take the opportunity, in speaking to this amendment, to put on the public record, for the benefit again of the shadow treasurer, the true state of the Australian public service. It is publicly available on the Australian Public Service Commission's website. The *Australian Public Service Statistical Bulletin* outlines the levels of employment, both ongoing and non-ongoing, within the Australian public service. It provides an interesting historical perspective of the attitudes of different governments to the Australian public service. As I indicated in my earlier contribution, when the Rudd government was elected in 2007 there were 155,091 Australian public servants. In 2008 that number increased to 159,299, according to the Australian Public Service Commission. In 2009 it increased to 161,277. In 2010 it increased to 163,793. In 2011 it increased to 165,478. In 2012 it increased to 167,339.

The Abbott government was elected in 2013, and from that point the numbers started to decline—in 2013 to 166,153. So the numbers peaked at 167,339 in the final year of the Gillard government and then started to decline, to 166,153 in 2013. These figures are as at 30 June in each year. In 2014, when the big cuts came, as a result of the incoming government, the number decreased to 157,956 as at 30 June 2014. As at 30 June 2015 it had shrunk further, to 152,430. Those numbers come, as I say, from the Australian Public Service Commission's *APS Statistical Bulletin*. They outline the growth in the public service over the period of the Rudd and Gillard governments and the removal of all of those positions under the federal Liberal government.

In Mr Hanson's contribution just now, although he turned the volume down—he was not shouting and he was not angry with everyone—he still felt it was appropriate to attack individuals in this place.

Mr Hanson: You sacked her. I didn't

MR BARR: And there we go again, Madam Speaker. That sort of approach demonstrates a lot about a person's character and demonstrates a lot about their ability to debate the substantive issues—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: or reduce this place—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson.

MR BARR: to a university debating contest about each other. That, unfortunately, is Mr Hanson's approach to most of the debates in this place, whether it be the interjections he constantly makes, the shouting, the abuse or just the desire to be an alpha male, it would seem, in the context of this chamber. If that is the way he wants to approach his leadership of the Liberal Party and his candidacy for the chief ministership of the territory, all I need do is to remind him now that these debates are

broadcast and are available for the public to hear and see exactly how individuals behave in this chamber. It is not often reported on in the mainstream media, but the serial offender in this place in terms of appalling behaviour, the Leader of the Opposition, can now be seen much more publicly. We often have debates in this place, as we do now, with an empty public gallery. But Mr Hanson's behaviour—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Have you got a point of order, Mr Hanson?

Mr Hanson: on a point of order as to relevance—

MR BARR: Can you stop the clock please, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Mr Hanson: we are debating the budget and the implications of the budget. A verbose critique of other people's debating styles is hardly relevant to this debate.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The question is that the amendment be agreed to. Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, there is a great deal more public scrutiny of the nature of people's contributions in this place, and Mr Hanson would do well to reflect upon that, given the way that he has conducted himself this morning and consistently during his time in this place. But let us not dwell too much on the Leader of the Opposition; let us focus on the issues.

We have heard a lot today about unity tickets, and we heard a lot about unity tickets prior to 2013. So I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition has used that language because it allows a direct comparison with what the former Prime Minister said prior to the 2013 election. It was all about goodness and light then. We were all on unity tickets about education funding. We were all on unity tickets about health funding. There were to be no cuts to pensions, no cuts to the ABC, no cuts to the SBS and no changes to the GST. It was all laid out very publicly before the 2013 election. We then had the 2014 budget which cut health and education, and made a virtue of it. It was there in the savings table. It was the big way to address what was then allegedly a budget emergency.

Fast-forward a couple of years, substitute the Prime Minister and the Treasurer with the B team, and apparently it is no longer a budget emergency. You have a federal government that is projecting over its forward estimates four consecutive deficits. Apparently, there is no budget emergency. We will certainly compare and contrast the commentary of the Canberra Liberals on the territory budget next month with their apparent preparedness to support continued budget deficits at this time at the federal level, given that their federal colleagues are not projecting a surplus at any point in the forward estimates period of this year's budget; yet they are still cutting funding to health and education. They have not restored funding to the concessions program that

was cut in 2014. They have imposed a further efficiency dividend on the Australian public service. And they continue their attack on the National Gallery, the National Library and the National Film and Sound Archive, who should be firing up to boost tourism in this city. Instead they are firing their staff as a result of this budget. It is very disappointing, Madam Speaker.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (12.24): Certainly, I do not feel that Mr Hanson requires any defence from me, but I was surprised to hear Mr Barr talking about Mr Hanson's aggressive attitude. I would not imagine that Mr Barr would say that I yell, hector and bully across the chamber. I doubt that anyone would be able to claim that about me. It is one of those instances when someone likes to put something on the record to suit themselves, because I have witnessed many instances of Mr Barr performing this so-called alpha male activity as well.

He talked about personal attacks on people. In that regard I would like to mention Ms Burch's comment earlier about child care. If Ms Burch had bothered to listen to me when we were having the debate, if she had read the amendment that I put forward or had read *Hansard*, she would know that *Hansard* quite clearly says:

... since 1 July 2011, the Federal Government has funded more than \$1.044 billion over three years into the Family Support Program.

I was not implying that it was an ongoing program; I was referring to a program that had been going on for three years. Mr Barr talked about personal attacks; I was struck by this at the time that Ms Burch moved her motion about child care and I moved an amendment. Ms Burch obviously did not have enough information or knowledge at her fingertips at that time to rebut what I had said because she came back in an adjournment debate to talk about what I had said—an adjournment debate that was purportedly about the head of CIT who had recently left his position and had then died. She used that adjournment debate to attack me about what I had said about the family support program. That, Madam Speaker, is grubby politics. How do you think the family of that man felt when they read that adjournment debate about their father and husband and saw a petty attack on another MLA as part of what should have been a testament, a memorial, to a man who had given such public service to the ACT?

I think this is an example of the pot calling the kettle black. We cannot say that it is Mr Hanson making grubby personal attacks when exactly the same thing or worse is coming from the other side. I really do not believe this is something at which you should be pointing fingers. It is actually a matter of improving your own behaviour, leading by example. When I speak to people out at mobile offices, that is what people talk about—the appalling behaviour of people in our Assembly, the grubbiness, the dirtiness, the personal attacks.

Mr Hanson is leading an opposition. He is prosecuting an argument, and he is doing that with vigour, passion and determination. Equally, on many occasions, Mr Barr is doing that on the government's behalf. It does not mean that anyone needs to resort to grubby personal attacks of that kind.

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 12.28 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Planning—Brumbies lease variation

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, did Mr David Lamont or his associates or companies have any dealings with your government or your bureaucracy about the sale of the Brumbies land at Griffith or their move before 2013?

MR BARR: I do not believe so, but I will check the record to confirm that my recollection is correct.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, who was granted the \$7.5 million waiver of the lease variation charge?

MR BARR: I believe the Brumbies, who were the then lessees of the former Canberra south bowling club. Again, just to ensure that the record is 100 per cent accurate, I will check the correspondence and confirm that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, did Mr Lamont, his associates or companies make representations to the government to have the LVC waived?

MR BARR: Again, Madam Speaker, I do not believe so. I believe the representations came from the Brumbies themselves. Again, I will confirm that. But that is my recollection.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, who in the government negotiated the LVC waiver and gave notification of the waiver?

MR BARR: Those are matters that the Treasury has policy responsibility for.

University of Canberra—Brumbies sponsorship

MR COE: My question is to the minister for higher education. Regarding development proposals and activities at the University of Canberra, what is the nature of UC's sponsorship of the Brumbies, and what is the cash component of this deal?

MS FITZHARRIS: That is a matter for the University of Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, what inclusions are there comprising the in-kind sponsorship for the Brumbies from the University of Canberra; and have you ever sought to find out information about this arrangement?

MS FITZHARRIS: I reiterate my previous answer that this is a matter for the University of Canberra. I have not received any representation on this matter in my role as minister for higher education or my role as an MLA.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, has any other entity paid a cash sponsorship to the Brumbies on the University of Canberra's behalf?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly, again, that is a matter for the University of Canberra and one of which I am not aware.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, have you received any representations from Mr David Lamont, his associates or companies regarding any proposal for development at the University of Canberra?

MS FITZHARRIS: No, not at any point.

Government—clubs policy

MR SMYTH: My question is to the Chief Minister. I refer to a report in today's *Canberra Times* citing your remarks on predatory behaviour of larger clubs in the ACT. Chief Minister, is it your preference that smaller clubs would cease to exist entirely or be saved by another club?

MR BARR: My preference is that clubs that were established for a particular community purpose be able to continue to operate for that community purpose.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Chief Minister, what impact has the government's increases in rates and charges, licensing fees, regulation and red tape had on the viability of clubs in the ACT?

MR BARR: The government has been reducing red tape and regulation for the club sector, and clubs have also been the beneficiary of significant payroll tax cuts in recent times.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, for how long has the government been of the view that there are predatory clubs in Canberra?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, when one looks at the various snapshots in time of the club industry and one looks at the model that effectively requires capital to continue to be accumulated and, therefore, ploughed back into the acquisition of an ever-increasing asset base, it is clear that, if you were to rewind 20 years there were more clubs and more smaller clubs in operation in this city at that time. Prior to the changes to the gaming machine rules, particularly around the trading scheme, the only way for the larger clubs to acquire more machines tended to be through the acquisition of smaller clubs. Fortunately, that model has changed, which I think is a good outcome.

But, ultimately, Madam Speaker, my great fear is that the club industry in the ACT will turn out a little bit like the fast food giants or the supermarket duopoly where the logical conclusion of the current trajectory is that we will end up with a situation where there are a very small number of large club groups that completely dominate the industry and where we will have moved a long way from the original purpose of clubs, particularly the small, community-based clubs.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, is the Labor Club a predatory club given that in the past it has taken over a smaller club?

MR BARR: The Labor Club certainly has grown in size over time.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: It has, and I certainly would not be supporting the Labor Club growing any larger.

Trade unions—memorandum of understanding

MR WALL: My question is to the minister for small business. Minister, when you were appointed as a minister were you aware of the memorandum of understanding between the ACT government and UnionsACT? When did you become aware of the MOU and how did you become aware of the MOU?

DR BOURKE: That was three questions, as far as I could tell, all compressed into one lot.

When I became a minister, I may have had some awareness of the existence of the MOU; I do not recall. But I have certainly become more aware of it since. Certainly I have become aware of it since, especially from the questions of the—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear Dr Bourke. The acoustics are not great in here today; the voices are not travelling. I would like to hear Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Yes, I am aware of the MOU but, as I recall, it was certainly discussed in the public accounts committee.

Mr Wall: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Wall.

Mr Wall: On relevance, Madam Speaker, the question was specifically: was the minister aware when he became a minister, how did he become aware—

MADAM SPEAKER: And when did he become aware.

Mr Wall: When did he become aware and how did he become aware, not: when was it possibly discussed in a public forum.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I am going to make a ruling on the point of order, Mr Hanson, and I will remind members that the answers to questions should be directly relevant to the question and that, although there were three subquestions or three questions, they were quite specific. I ask Dr Bourke if he could come directly to the point about the MOU: when he became aware and how he became aware. That would be helpful for everybody.

DR BOURKE: I understand that it was in the ministerial pack provided to ministers.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what actions have you taken to reduce the negative impact that this MOU has on local small businesses?

DR BOURKE: I have had no representations from small business about the negative impacts, if there are indeed any, of the MOU—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mrs Jones!

DR BOURKE: as minister for small business.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, have you raised any concerns with the Chief Minister about the lack of consultation with you about this agreement?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, could you repeat the question. I really did not hear what you had to say.

MR HANSON: Sure, Madam Speaker. Have you raised any concerns with the Chief Minister about the lack of consultation about this agreement?

DR BOURKE: I reject the premise of the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, why is it that the CFMEU is better informed about this MOU than the minister for small business?

DR BOURKE: I understand that is a question for the CFMEU, isn't it?

Federal government—budget

MR HINDER: My question is for the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer inform the Assembly how the federal budget handed down last night will affect Canberra?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Hinder for the question. I can say, starting on a positive note, that the government was very pleased to see in the correspondence to me from the Prime Minister and the Treasurer that there will be an extra \$7 million towards the light rail project, confirming now the commonwealth's support for that project to the tune of \$67 million.

That, combined with the proceeds of the asset sales undertaken as part of the asset recycling initiative, ensures that the ACT government will be able to make its capital contribution of \$375 million. So more than half of the light rail project, stage 1, is already paid for through the ACT government contribution, and now the extra money from the commonwealth. That was a pleasing element of last night's budget.

Disappointingly though, Madam Speaker, Canberra has been asked once again to carry a disproportionate share of the burden. We are seeing both in terms of the further efficiency dividend and then the \$2 billion in cuts that are in there under the column "decisions taken but not yet announced" that there is a considerable downside for the territory as a result of last night's federal budget.

We are particularly concerned, as we have been discussing in this place today, about the impact on the national cultural institutions, which were exempted from previous efficiency dividends under the federal Labor government. So it is disappointing to see that there are 60 positions going between the National Gallery, the National Film and Sound Archive and the National Library and a further three positions being lost from the National Portrait Gallery.

These are small institutions that play an important role in Canberra's cultural tourism sector. So it is disappointing to see, at a time when we want them firing up for tourism, that in fact they are being told by their federal Liberal masters to fire people.

That is disappointing; very disappointing for the cultural institutions that we all recognise in this place are of great local and national significance.

Overall, we will receive some additional funding from the commonwealth for some minor road upgrades but the territory was not the beneficiary of any significant new infrastructure announcements, which was disappointing. I know that the Canberra Business Chamber have expressed that disappointment as well. As I am aware, they, amongst others, were lobbying very hard for a significant fiscal contribution from the commonwealth towards a new national convention centre. That was not forthcoming in this year's budget.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: Treasurer, why is it important for the ACT government to support the ACT economy in light of the budget last night?

MR BARR: Once again, Madam Speaker, it will fall to this ACT Labor government to provide the support that this economy needs, given the abrogation of responsibility from the federal government for the economic growth of the city of Canberra. Their budget last night was badged to the point of monotony around the three-word slogan of "jobs and growth", but Canberra got the exact opposite. We did not get jobs—we lost jobs—and we did not get growth. So we will need to do the heavy lifting, once again, as this government has always done to support jobs and to support the diversification of the territory economy.

I am very pleased to be able to advise that the government intends over the next five weeks as we conclude our deliberations on our budget to be able to support hospitals and schools and to support the infrastructure that this city needs, and we will be employing more Canberrans as a result of our budget. I can say that very confidently.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Treasurer, what will be the impact of the federal budget on our national institutions?

MR BARR: It is very significant and disappointing for those national institutions, for the staff who work there and for the staff who will lose their jobs. I had the opportunity to catch up with the board of the National Gallery just last week. We discussed, with some concern shared by all of the board members, the long-term future for institutions like the NGA if they are forced, time and time again, to meet ongoing efficiency dividends. I think it is important that, from here on in, those smaller national institutions are exempted from any further efficiency dividends that the commonwealth government may seek to impose.

I have made that public statement today, and I have called upon the Leader of the Opposition Bill, Shorten, to take the opportunity, in his address-in-reply or before the federal election, to indicate that he would not go ahead with those efficiency dividends. I have identified a funding source for him. He, if elected Prime Minister, will proceed to a full parliamentary vote on the question of marriage equality. He

would not need to expend \$160 million on a plebiscite, and a small proportion of that money could be made available to reverse the efficiency dividends for our national cultural institutions.

That would be a practical way that we could save our national cultural institutions from the efficiency dividend and not waste \$160 million on a plebiscite for an issue that can be resolved by a free vote of all members of the federal parliament. Were a free vote to be granted after the election, marriage equality would be a reality in Australia. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Treasurer, what will be the impact of the federal budget of last night on the Australian public service here in Canberra?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think I am going to have to rule that question out of order because the Chief Minister is not responsible for the Australian public service. On reflection, the previous question was out of order because the Chief Minister is not responsible for national institutions such as the Portrait Gallery, and I am going to rule that question out of order.

Manuka Oval—development proposal

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Economic Development. Minister, when were you first approached about an unsolicited proposal about Manuka Oval and the surrounding section?

MR BARR: In 2015, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, were Ms Burch and you aware of the proposal to redevelop the Manuka Oval precinct when you proposed the Manuka land swap?

MR BARR: The LDA proposed the Manuka land swap as part of the government response to the 2013 Manuka Oval master plan that did identify that site following the fire that occurred at the Services Club site. That site was identified as part of the 2013 master plan and it was made public at that time and presented to the Inner South Canberra Community Council as part of the government's thinking in relation to Manuka Oval development. That master planning process began in 2009. So, four years of work, four years of consultation and four years of consideration of the issues led into that 2013 master plan. And, at that point in time, it identified not only a range of upgrade options for Manuka Oval but also two sites outside the existing oval footprint but inside the Manuka circle that could be explored for supplementary development associated with upgrades to the oval. That was public in 2013.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Was Mr Lamont or his company associated with the Manuka land swap proposal involving MOCCA?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am sorry, what was the last bit “involving”?

MR HANSON: MOCCA.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, did Ms Burch, you, your office or any of your government officials discuss the Manuka land swap with Mr Lamont or his company or associates?

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

Planning—Telopea school

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, in August last year you supported an amended motion that inter alia supported a return of the lease of the Telopea Park tennis courts to school and community use. Given that the courts are now listed on a separate block to the oval when once they both sat under block 5, section 36, what is the current leasehold status of both block 6, section 36 and block 7, section 36: the oval and the tennis courts?

MR RATTENBURY: I have inquired about this matter since becoming education minister to ensure that those blocks have been returned to the school. My recollection is that they have been. In terms of the very specific questions about block and section numbers Mrs Jones has asked, I will seek clarity on that to make sure that I am able to give the Assembly the full answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Is there a reason that both blocks have not been returned to the Education Directorate for educational use only, and is there any reason to keep them as separate blocks?

MR RATTENBURY: I was not involved in and I am not aware of the process of how those blocks were returned. As I say, the inquiries I have made have been to ensure that the school has access to those blocks but I am happy to follow up on Mrs Jones’s question.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister is there a time frame attached to either of the leases?

MR RATTENBURY: I will have to take that on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why were these blocks separated in the first place?

MR RATTENBURY: As I indicated in my earlier answer, I was not involved in that process so I am not able to answer Mr Doszpot's question as to why that was done.

Planning—proposed new suburb of Thompson

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. At the Tuggeranong Community Council meeting on 5 April 2016 you spoke about the proposed number of dwellings in Thompson, a proposed new suburb in Tuggeranong. You talked about the size of Thompson compared to Crace and the number of dwellings for Thompson compared to Crace indicated a significant level of density expected for Thompson. I have been told that other directorate officials were in the dark about the announcement of the new suburb of Thompson.

Minister, what discussions did your office and your directorate have with the Environment and Planning Directorate about the environmental impacts of a new suburb of Thompson, including on the threatened scarlet robin, before you announced that new suburb?

MR GENTLEMAN: I should say that, at first blush, of course, the idea for a suburb west of Greenway will involve a discussion with the constituents of Tuggeranong and the rest of Canberra on whether such a suburb should go ahead. In advance of that, there were studies done with LDA across directorates to look at the opportunity for residential development at the site which is known as Thompson and whether or not there is an opportunity. LDA came back and advised that, indeed, there was an opportunity to do some residential development there. In regard to the environmental impacts of Thompson, of course, as I said on the night at TCC, it is very much a matter that we need to look at the environmental impact statements, the environmental studies for the area.

In regard to the scarlet robin, my understanding is—and this is from information provided by the Canberra Ornithologists Group on their website—the scarlet robin is actually in place all over the ACT. It is strongest in its appearances in the western part and the southern part of the ACT. Indeed, the maps of COG show there does not appear to be any breeding evidence of the scarlet robin around that Murrumbidgee corridor or any other proposed residential area.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what discussions did your directorate or office have with the transport and municipal services directorate and the sport and recreation directorate about the impacts of the new suburb of Thompson on the community, including local sporting clubs, before you announced the new suburb?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have not announced a new suburb. It is an idea to go out for discussion with the rest of the community.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: In regard to—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr. I would like to hear Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: In regard to discussions across directorates, they are ongoing, as they were earlier on. There is an interesting point here, of course, when we look at—

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms Lawder: My question specifically asked about the consultation before the minister announced the new suburb, not ongoing discussions.

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Firstly, Mr Gentleman, there is a point of order; you sit down. If someone wants to make a contribution to the point of order, Mr Corbell, the usual convention is that you rise to your feet and make a contribution in that way.

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: An interjection when I am going to make a ruling on a point of order is disorderly. Ms Lawder's question was about consultation before an announcement was made, so I would ask Mr Gentleman to be directly relevant to the question about what discussions he, his office or directorate had with TAMS and sport and recreation before an announcement had been made.

MR GENTLEMAN: I reiterate that there has been no announcement about a new suburb. It is an investigation to see whether residential would be applicable there. In regard to consultations between my office and directorates, they have been ongoing for some time, including well before the announcement. I think we began this work about 18 months ago, well before Mr Seselja talked about going across the river.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, how many dwellings are proposed for Thompson?

Mr Gentleman: I am sorry; I did not hear the question.

MR WALL: I will repeat it for the minister's benefit: minister, how many dwellings are proposed for Thompson?

MR GENTLEMAN: We have indicated that there could be up to some 3,500 dwellings, but in the conversation I had with TCC I mentioned upwards of 2,000 dwellings. It will be—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: It will be up to what the community feels for this particular area, whether the community actually wants to go ahead with this opportunity for Tuggeranong, and then the level of density it wants to see; whether it wants to see really a tight densification or a more open aspect for the area. It is quite early days and I am listening to all of these constituents. Indeed, we have EPD officials going out and talking to stakeholders on a one-to-one basis as we speak.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what is the average block proposed per dwelling for Thompson?

MR GENTLEMAN: There is not any proposed block size at this stage. As I said, these are early days. We are talking to the community about what they would like to see there. Of course, those plans would go in through the territory plan variation and the DA process as well.

Small business—innovation partnerships program

MS BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Small Business and the Arts. Minister, can you tell us how the ACT government small business innovation partnerships program you launched last Friday provides benefits for both small business and the government?

DR BOURKE: The small business innovation partnerships program has been carefully crafted to address the needs of both the ACT government and local small to medium-size enterprises. The program is about connecting ACT government directorates with innovative businesses to co-design solutions and deliver quality outcomes for the ACT public sector. The small business innovation partnerships program will foster a cultural innovation within the ACT government, driving

outcomes that are co-designed and fully informed by the range of possibilities offered by Canberra's innovative small business sector.

Directorates can engage with the market early to better understand the options and to consider the solutions in the market. This will ensure the government is in a position to understand what is really needed, as well as the range of options available in the market. This is likely to be particularly useful in fast-moving technology fields where it may be difficult for government to stay abreast of developments.

Importantly, this program equally delivers benefits to small business. The local small business sector wants greater opportunities to work with ACT government agencies in an engaging and innovative way. This small business community participation in the co-design process to create the small business innovation partnerships program framework ensures that it addresses their needs as well as ours.

The program is about ensuring local small businesses get access to government contracts and that these contracts give them the opportunity to commercialise their products. Critically, small businesses will retain the intellectual property for their development, allowing them to resell their product across Australia and overseas. This is particularly important because it allows small businesses to utilise their engagement with the ACT government as a springboard to upscale their business and commercialise their ideas. They can go on to sell the products they develop for the program to other governments and organisations in Australia and around the world.

As Minister for Small Business, I appreciate the challenges small businesses face in securing contracts with government, and many of these are small businesses that already successfully sell their products and services around Australia and the world. We want these local businesses to be able to engage with their local government first and find common ground.

As the Chief Minister said recently in his state of the territory address, we want to ensure everyone has a fair chance to show government how their products will improve efficiency and productivity. We need the innovation, efficiency and agility the small business innovation partnerships program will give us, delivering benefits for government and small business alike.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Minister, how is the Arboretum piloting the small business innovative partnerships program?

DR BOURKE: The National Arboretum Canberra is engaged with local small business APositive to build an app that will provide an augmented reality experience for visitors to the Arboretum. The app will track a visitor's location in the Arboretum, finding which forest they are in and then play appropriate sounds from that forest's country of origin. It will create a unique visitor experience.

The app is being implemented in the Arboretum as a pilot project under the small business innovation partnerships program. The project was initiated in the fourth

round of the digital Canberra challenge. The DC challenge was to improve access to existing information in the built environment within the Arboretum and to improve the visitor experience.

APositive was selected in a competitive process with its proposal for the augmented reality experience. Under the digital Canberra challenge, APositive engaged in an extensive co-design process with the Arboretum and designed a tailored solution to meet the Arboretum's needs. APositive subsequently delivered a prototype demonstrating its solution.

The app was awarded joint winner of the challenge, along with the ESA workforce connect app, which was designed by local SME Three72. The ESA workforce connect app is now also being implemented as a pilot project under the small business innovation partnerships program.

In this way, the small business innovation partnerships program builds on the work of the digital Canberra challenge, taking into account the learnings from that program and seeking to embed the spirit of the challenge into normal ACT government business.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: Minister, how does the small business innovation partnerships program offer advantages over our traditional procurement processes?

DR BOURKE: The traditional procurement method of going to market with a list of requirements only works if government fully understands what it wants and what are the possibilities. Government cannot be fully abreast of developments, particularly in areas with fast-moving technology. The speed and intensity with which technology and products are evolving require bigger engagement with those at the forefront of the industries.

We do not know all the ideas and products being developed daily in Canberra's vibrant innovation hubs. Feedback from industry tells us that the list of requirements in a government procurement can be limiting and narrowing and does not provide industry with the opportunity to demonstrate new and innovative solutions. Under the small business innovation partnerships program, ACT government directorates do not tell industry what it is they want but rather tell them their problem and let industry pitch potential solutions.

A further advantage is that under the small business innovation partnerships program, selected small businesses first develop a prototype or trial of their proposed solution, allowing ACT government directorates to consider the solution before committing to a full implementation. This reduces the risks associated with the innovative solutions whilst also ensuring that if a full rollout of the prototype does not go ahead local businesses can take the prototype to other agencies, governments or businesses.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: Minister, have programs similar to the small business innovation partnerships program been successful elsewhere?

DR BOURKE: The small business innovation partnerships program builds on the lessons and successes of the digital Canberra challenge, and similar programs have been implemented in Australia and internationally. The US was the first country to introduce a small business innovation research program, in 1982, and today there are 11 federal agencies committing 2.8 per cent of their entire research and development budget to this program. \$US25 billion has been spent under the US small business innovation research program over the last decade, with an average of 7,000 projects funded each year. The success of the program in the US has inspired similar initiatives in other OECD countries, notably Japan, the UK and the Netherlands. In Australia the federal, Victorian, South Australian and Queensland governments have implemented similar initiatives.

The ACT small business innovation partnerships program is resourced through directorates' existing purchasing budgets. We want to instil a cultural change within government that opens up the procurement process, making it easier for our world-class businesses to engage with ACT government. The program aims to become business as usual—just another procurement channel government can use to achieve new, cost-effective and innovative solutions to meet its needs.

These programs have a double aim—to stimulate industry innovation and economic growth while at the same time providing government agencies with new, cost-effective technical and scientific solutions to meet their needs.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Canberra Hospital—oxygen supply

MR CORBELL: Yesterday in question time Mr Hanson asked me whether I could check my records and come back to this place to confirm that oxygen being in short supply has not led to patients being either not admitted or turned away. I can advise Mr Hanson and the Assembly as follows, Madam Speaker: all oxygen needs of patients were met and fully catered for during recent planned works being undertaken as part of the emergency department expansion project. I am advised that no patients were turned away as a result of a lack of oxygen.

The building works did require an interruption to all medical gases and, as a result, a strategy was put in place to ensure backup supplies were available in the hospital, including the use of large portable oxygen cylinders. These specialised works were planned in advance, were well implemented and were supported by technical experts in the field.

Planning—Molonglo Valley

MR GENTLEMAN: Yesterday I received a question regarding the new shopping centre for the Molonglo district, specifically in Coombs. I can advise that the

2015 development application for the shopping centre was refused by the Planning and Land Authority due to a range of planning issues, including the suitability of the design for the site. An application to reconsider the decision was subsequently lodged and was again refused earlier this year as the revised information did not substantially improve the development. So before we can commence we need to ensure that those developments are approved.

Government funding priorities

Debate resumed.

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) (3.11): I take the opportunity to speak again on this motion and this time on Ms Burch's amendment to the motion. I particularly want to reflect on the government's decision not to provide some certainty around the national partnership agreement, which provides the most important support for homelessness services here in the ACT and across the country.

Members will know that on 23 March last year, after considerable angst from the community and this government and questions about whether there was going to be a national partnership agreement on homelessness services in the ACT, the Minister for Social Services announced that the commonwealth government would extend the national partnership agreement on homelessness for two years to 30 June 2017. Unfortunately in the budget announcement last night no certainty was provided by the federal Liberal Party around that agreement that it would be continued beyond June 2017 to provide increased amounts of money for such important homelessness services in the ACT such as organisations like Toora Women Inc, which provides accommodation and support services for women who experience domestic violence, and Barnardos, which provides supported accommodation through the our place program for young people undertaking education.

When I spoke earlier on the motion, I talked about how important it was and how the government would continue to provide support for low income Canberrans and young people who will be affected, unfortunately, by the announcement of the federal government of a real work for the dole scheme, as they have described it. It will mean more young people will be pushed into homelessness. Fortunately, here in the ACT, through the national partnership agreement—at least until 2017—we are able to provide those additional supports to young people through programs like our place and organisations like Barnardos.

Here in the ACT, through the national partnership agreement, we have been able to fund vital programs such as St Vincent de Paul's street to home program, which provides support for rough sleepers in the ACT. It has been such a successful program that the ACT has the lowest number of rough sleepers in the country. We also have in the ACT organisations like Woden Community Service providing the supportive tenancy service, which will continue under the national partnership agreement until at least 2017.

Madam Speaker, last month when I met in Brisbane with housing ministers from across the country to talk about homelessness and how it was being dealt with, it was clear from every single housing minister in every state and territory that certainty around the NPAH had universal and bipartisan support because of the importance of that funding to all of those support services that make a real difference across the country. It was agreed that certainty and an increase in funding are needed to be able to continue to provide extra support.

The ACT has been able to provide a lot of different supports for young people through: the friendly landlord service with Barnardos; the youth identified accommodation support program, another Barnardos program which assists young people to sustain long-term stable accommodation arrangements with their support families; the young parents program, a program delivered by St Vincent de Paul; the housing support service delivered by CatholicCare, which provides outreach to support young people; the take hold program delivered by the Ted Noffs Foundation, which provides life skills, training and mentoring to young people; the Family Tree House, which provides a conflict resolutions service; the our place program, which I have mentioned previously and which provides transitional accommodation to young people enrolled in education or attending a traineeship apprenticeship under a foyer-like model; and the Youth Emergency Accommodation Network—YEAN—which I was able to visit along with Senator Katy Gallagher to talk about how that program supports young people who are at risk of homelessness or are experiencing homelessness.

It is concerning how the federal budget announced yesterday will affect young people in Canberra and across the country, particularly around their employment. I cannot imagine how a young person will be able to survive on a pay of \$4 an hour along with cuts to the youth allowance and Newstart, which would have provided some of these young people with at least the chance to have a crack at getting some employment for themselves. Under the scheme the federal government has introduced, they will be required to work for \$4 an hour. That unfortunately leaves them open to unscrupulous employers who might take advantage of the fact that they can pay someone a lesser amount of money than they would normally be legally entitled to.

I am very happy to speak to this motion and to Ms Burch's amendment. I support the calls for the ACT government to condemn the increased efficiency dividends that have been imposed on the Australian public service, to continue to support the ACT economy in light of the impact caused by the ongoing cuts to the Australian public service, and to condemn some of the announcements that will affect youth employment and housing and homelessness services across the ACT and the country.

MR HINDER (Ginninderra) (3.18): I will talk to the amendment and close the debate, but before I do that, I thank you, Madam Speaker, and those members who have contributed to the debate on the motion today. In particular, I thank the Chief Minister for his contribution and for his leadership and strong economic stewardship of the territory. I also thank Minister Rattenbury for his contribution on the impact of federal Liberal cuts to the education system. Thanks also to my colleague Ms Burch

for adding additional value to this motion through her amendment and to Ministers Berry, Bourke and Gentleman for their support of this motion.

If the rhetoric of those opposite is to be believed, members in this chamber are in furious agreement with me and the government in supporting more jobs, better health and education, and properly funded concessions for Canberrans. For this reason it seems logical that all members of this Assembly will support this motion. We must send a very strong message to Mr Hanson's colleagues up on the hill that all the elected representatives in the Assembly will fight for investment, jobs and growth here in Canberra.

Clearly, the federal Liberals' obsession with cuts must be opposed. Mr Hanson appears to be in furious agreement yet again that we as an Assembly must all oppose further cuts to education, health, pensions and seniors concessions across our community, but I fear that Mr Hanson's and Mr Smyth's rhetoric on standing up for Canberra does not match the reality.

It is insightful to watch the Leader of the Opposition rant about unity tickets. He has in one breath praised the federal Liberal budget whilst claiming to support the Barr Labor government's campaign to stop the cuts to health and education for Canberra. Is he in or is he out? I am unclear at this point, Madam Speaker.

I know, and most uncomfortably for those opposite, the people of Canberra know, that Mr Hanson does not give a stuff about cuts to health and education. Clearly Mr Hanson went to the same ideological school as his mate and former Prime Minister Mr Abbott. The lesson at that school is that if you keep repeating a falsehood long enough, people will believe you. He did it on rates, he is doing it on light rail, and he is doing it to Canberrans in relation to the federal budget.

Mr Coe: Keep talking about rates. Keep talking about rates.

MR HINDER: I'll get to rates; don't you worry. Their budget is about more cuts, more misnamed efficiency dividends, more blows to small business confidence and a knock-on to job insecurity for those employed by businesses that rely on customers who are public servants.

Madam Speaker, the budget failed women in particular with a promise of \$100 million to address domestic violence. It appears that is going to fund a TV ad and more action plans, but no action. There is not one extra dollar for legal funding to assist women in that situation. No wonder Mr Hanson had to resort to bizarre references to ice and bikies to deflect from the budget and avoid the stark reality of hypocrisy from him and Mr Smyth.

Mr Smyth: Goodness me.

MR HINDER: Wait, wait, wait. On hypocrisy, Mr Smyth railed about the Barr Labor government's record increased taxes and charges. I must remind the Assembly of Mr Smyth's record whilst Minister for Urban Services. Mr Smyth has serious form on tax increases. In one year alone he hiked up parking fines by a whopping 268 per cent

and fines for driving unregistered vehicles by 256 per cent. I know some in the Assembly may find it hard to believe it, but Mr Smyth is the king of increased taxes through fines. Some fines increased—

Mr Coe: Defending unregistered vehicles? How many unregistered vehicles do you have, Jayson?

MR HINDER: Well, it would only be poor people, wouldn't it, mate? Some fines increased by 400 per cent in Mr Smyth's time as minister. Clearly those opposite are completely out of touch and have their priorities all wrong. They are more interested in keeping their friends in the federal Liberal Party happy than standing up for Canberra. Who knows when another Senate spot might open up?

Unlike those opposite on this side of the Assembly we actually back up our rhetoric with action. The Barr Labor government has continued and always will continue to grow our economy and advocate around the world for Canberra businesses and our economy to help insulate us from the unending attack from the Liberal Party. We will stand up for Canberra and Canberrans. Madam Speaker, I thank those members who supported the motion today. I commend the motion.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Government Procurement (Capital Metro) Amendment Bill 2016

Debate resumed from 9 March 2016, on motion by **Mr Coe:**

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.24): I rise to oppose the private member's bill which seeks to amend the Government Procurement Act to remove provisions allowing confidential text to be withheld from publication on the government's contract register for contracts relating to the capital metro light rail.

The grounds for a territory entity to agree to withhold text from publication are sensible, conservative and in line with other legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act.

The ACT's transparency in its contract publication is a stand-out in this country, surpassing most other, if not all, jurisdictions by publishing not just some information about its contracts, but the actual text of all notifiable contracts. With this level of transparency it is critical for the territory to ensure that its contractors—and the territory itself—are protected by allowing certain text to be kept confidential.

Madam Speaker, as I said, the grounds for keeping text confidential are reasonable and they are sensible. The procurement act provides that a territory entity may propose or agree to keep text confidential if it is personal information; a trade secret or other business information that has a commercial value, which could reasonably be expected to be destroyed or diminished if it were disclosed; information about the business affairs of a person; information that could put public safety or the security of the territory at risk; or information that is required by law to be kept confidential.

Mr Coe's rather clumsy bill would have this information published in full for any project that is "related to" light rail. That potentially includes development within the light rail corridor. As I enunciate the reasons that this is such a poor bill, remember that it could apply to a raft of other projects that are within that development corridor.

Mr Coe, in his presentation speech, stated that his focus is on the financial aspects of the contract and that he is willing to work with the government to amend his bill so that trade secrets or intellectual property are not revealed. I am assuming he would also agree to have personal information withheld but even with all of those changes his bill would still be completely unacceptable.

Mr Coe's bill would take effect on a contract that has already been tendered, had a number of interactive bidding sessions and been carefully evaluated and negotiated, including in good faith on the part of the selected tenderer—all activities that have taken considerable time and effort, and therefore expense. The months of work for both the territory and the consortia have been conducted under the clear understanding that defined classes of text within the contract may be kept confidential when the contract is published. Now Mr Coe, through his legislation, would have the territory, in effect, change its mind. If enacted, if we voted for this bill today, it would result in the territory effectively going back on its word. We sought tenders under a particular regime and we would be changing that regime in a way that would have significant potential ramifications for the successful consortium.

If the territory were to publish information in the capital metro contract that would otherwise have been kept confidential, potentially commercially valuable information would be revealed to the consortium's competitors. It is reasonable to assume that Canberra Metro may endeavour to seek some form of recompense for what could be very significant commercial consequences. Mr Coe's bill would leave the territory exposed to the possibility of litigation from the consortium. There is a real chance that the consortium may seek to sue the territory for damages if the bill passes.

But the potential damage is not limited to just the consortium. If any enterprise imagined for a second that the territory would go back on an understanding that was in place when tenders were submitted, when interactive bidding sessions were held, when tenders were evaluated, and during negotiations—an understanding enshrined in territory legislation—if they imagined for a second that text that would otherwise be agreed by the responsible territory entity to be confidential would suddenly be required to be published in its entirety, for all to see—the territory's commercial standing would be demolished. And not just here, but across the world. As Mr Coe is

aware, along with the entire Canberra community, the capital metro project attracted tenders from multinational consortia.

The territory changing the conditions of a procurement while it is still in process, or enacting retrospective changes, is a serious step to take. It risks deterring bidders for future projects from investing their time and energy in putting competitive tenders together, which threatens the territory's ability to achieve value for money from its procurements by reducing the competitive market.

Mr Coe's bill would result in a less competitive marketplace due to a perception that the territory cannot be trusted not to change the conditions under which a tender is conducted and a fear that commercially sensitive material in an eventual contract may be published and revealed to competitors. A competitive marketplace is critical to the territory achieving value for money when it undertakes a procurement.

The procurement act requires the territory to have regard to open and effective competition when making value-for-money assessments in a procurement. It is hard to imagine a less fair scenario than changing the rules for participating in a procurement part of the way through and subjecting only one entity to those changed rules.

Mr Coe does not seem to understand that having the option of keeping text confidential is for the benefit of both businesses and government. It is a crucial part of the territory achieving value for money for its procurements. Businesses will not want to contract with the territory if they are not able to keep information that has a commercial value confidential when the contracts are published.

Whilst the government disagrees with his decision, I have assumed that Mr Coe has weighed up the costs and the alleged benefits of cancelling the capital metro contract if the Liberal Party wins government and has decided that cancelling a contract is worth the cost. However, I am not sure that he has considered as thoroughly the potential costs of this bill.

I can understand Mr Coe's disappointment that a supposed billion dollar light rail project is actually going to cost much less than the government had initially forecast. It certainly reduces his argument against the project significantly. Instead, he tries to accuse the government of hiding information and demanding that it be released.

But the total value of the contract is required to be published. Any amendments to the contract valued at \$25,000 or more, cumulatively, must be published. Information that is permitted to be kept confidential for reasons of commercial value or for other reasons allowed by the procurement act—not merely being labelled commercial in confidence but having a commercial value, privacy implications or other legal implications—must be agreed by the responsible territory entity. The reasons for keeping text confidential must be published. Mr Coe is trying to paint the government as secretive about the capital metro contract when it is anything but.

To sum up, this bill could commercially damage the capital metro consortium due to a loss of competitive advantage, with potential for legal action and associated costs to the territory; the bill could potentially lead to further legal action and claims for

damages due to the imposition of a law in retrospect; the bill could deter other consortia or businesses from seeking to contract with the territory, reducing competition, with a flow-on loss of value for money in future procurements; and the bill would trash the territory's commercial reputation, again leading to reduced competition in the marketplace and loss of value for money. And I repeat that the reasons for keeping text confidential are specific, reasonable and comparable to provisions in other legislation like the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr Coe's bill is not confined to capital metro itself but could also apply to any project "related to light rail", being any project within one kilometre of the light rail track. So these potential damages to the territory are multiplied.

On a final note, I am sorry to disappoint Mr Coe, but much of the information he is seeking to be published may not be in the contract between the territory and capital metro anyway. As a public-private partnership, there are numerous contractual relationships that do not involve the territory at all. As such, they are not governed by the Government Procurement Act, and therefore these contracts will not be published.

On the face of it, Mr Coe's bill might appear to some to be fairly inoffensive and to be limited in its effects, being apparently targeted at a single project. However, the opposite is, in fact, true. This bill, if it were passed, would set an untenable precedent. But even if we could be assured that this type of amendment would never be used again, the ramifications for this single instance are, as I have outlined, potentially far-reaching and place the territory's reputation and financial standing at significant risk, a risk that Mr Coe appears so cavalier about that he is prepared to take on many different issues of sovereign risk.

It is a risk that the government is not prepared to take. The government will not be supporting this short-sighted and irresponsible bill, just as we will argue vigorously against the dishonouring of the contracts that we will sign this month.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (3.36): The bill proposed by Mr Coe would amend the Government Procurement Act to remove the ability for notifiable contracts to contain confidential aspects. Importantly, it does not seek to do this generally for all government contracts or even for classes of government contracts. Mr Coe has proposed a change to the law to target one contract only for one project only, that is, the ACT's light rail project.

Confidentiality arises in contracts in various ways. It might be required by the parties to the contract or it might be required by other laws. Some examples include issues of personal privacy or commercial-in-confidence information. There might be legislative obligations for confidentiality, for example, under the Privacy Act. Another example might be in relation to confidential intellectual property or commercially sensitive information contained in a contract.

I have no desire—and members well know this—for information to remain unnecessarily confidential. Members will know that I have, as have the Greens over many years in this place, consistently sought to have information released publicly and to improve transparency of government processes. There are some times when

confidentiality is justified, but I think that as a default information should be public as often as possible. Transparency, scrutiny and involvement of the community are all very important in government processes.

I am quite happy to have a debate about transparency and about the release of government information. I am quite happy to debate the operations of the procurement system in the ACT. In fact, members will have the opportunity to debate some of these issues soon when I table legislation to significantly reform FOI laws in the territory. I have already released and consulted on a draft of this legislation. I expect that the debate on the FOI legislation will go to fundamental principles about confidentiality and about the public interest in government activities. I look forward to this debate and I look forward to Mr Coe's contribution to that.

But this piece of legislation that Mr Coe has put before us today is essentially the opposite. It does not go to principles at all. It tries to use the ACT's procurement legislation to politicise the capital metro project. It would be embarrassing for a legislature to pass such a law. Why does Mr Coe propose that if a project is about light rail a company cannot access commercial-in-confidence protocols but if the project is about, say, buses, which he has a new-found enthusiasm for, or recycling, it can? His proposals do not relate to procurement or confidentiality or transparency at all. This is just another medium for the Canberra Liberals to state their opposition to light rail.

Mr Coe refuses to acknowledge that the ACT's light rail project has had the highest level of transparency. It does not suit his political interest to admit this. In order to aid his political campaign, he wants to paint the capital metro project as secretive and the government as hiding important information. Anyone with any degree of objectivity will know that this is absolutely not true. The government has been transparent to an unusual degree. The points that Mr Coe likes to raise in his critique of light rail—points about the business case, for example—are available to him only because of the high level of transparency that the government has allowed.

As I have said before, you will not find a similar project with this level of transparency. Other governments go to great lengths to keep information about such projects secret. Those other governments would probably say that the ACT has been transparent to a fault, because transparency allows the particularly mischievous critics access to more information that they can twist or misuse in a negative campaign. That certainly has been happening in the ACT.

I accept that outcome, because it is important to be transparent, to give the public as much information as possible and to let them use it to make their decisions. The government has to make its case and, hopefully, the public can see through the misinformation and misleading arguments that they are being subjected to by the Canberra Liberals.

To conclude on this particular proposal from Mr Coe, I will not be supporting it. I will happily debate procurement processes and transparency if there is a sensible and genuine proposal for reform. But I believe what Mr Coe is putting forward is quite a ridiculous proposition, suggesting that we should have one standard of contracting for

one project and a different standard for all others. He is suggesting that some companies should have the protections from commercial in confidence and that other companies should not. I do not believe that makes any sense. I do not believe it is consistent. I do not believe it has any sound policy basis. Therefore, I cannot support it. Later, when Mr Coe talks to stakeholders who engage in contracts or commercial transactions, I am sure that they will also tell him that it makes no sense, and Mr Coe will be left in the very awkward position of having to explain the stunt he has engaged in today and the lack of consistency of policy positions that he is adopting when it comes to other matters.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.41), in reply: The Government Procurement (Capital Metro) Amendment Bill is a bill designed to ensure transparency regarding the capital metro light rail project. It is important that this bill be passed today. However, that is, of course, not looking likely. It will ensure that the government is up-front and transparent when it comes to capital metro. This government, of course, claims that they are the champions of transparency and open government. Now is a good opportunity for them to prove it.

Capital metro, if it goes ahead, will be the largest ever financial commitment by an ACT government. It is right then that taxpayers are given the opportunity to view the contract and the financials. Ultimately, it is Canberrans—generations of them—through their rates, fees and charges who will pay for this project.

Of most concern to the opposition, and I think of concern to the majority of Canberrans, is the total cost of this project. For instance, what payments will the ACT government make outside of the capital metro contract? To date the government has spent or budgeted approximately \$130 million on capital metro, which is not included in the capital metro contract. Commercial-in-confidence provisions can be used to hide certain payments which could ordinarily be associated with the project. The bill today would stop them from being hidden.

Furthermore, commercial-in-confidence provisions can be used to hide pricing schedules. The government could do this to ensure that their light rail appears affordable, at least in 2019 and 2020, and then perhaps it might escalate. In effect, we may well see a back-ending of the financial obligations with regard to this contract. Commercial-in-confidence provisions may also be used to suppress lending rates in the contract which would deny Canberrans the opportunity to understand the full cost of financing this project.

If the government is willing to sign a secret MOU with UnionsACT, an MOU which is hidden from cabinet ministers, then surely this is a government capable and willing to hide details of a government contract. This is a government that has an appalling track record when it comes to transparency. This is a government that has a secret deal regarding procurement. If they have a secret deal regarding procurement, we need to make sure that it does not happen again. Legislation such as this, legislation I am bringing forward today, would help prove to Canberrans that there will be some transparency in this project.

Since I introduced this bill in March many constituents have contacted me regarding the use of commercial-in-confidence provisions and how they could apply to the capital metro project. An example of these provisions was used earlier this year when you, Madam Assistant Speaker, asked the Minister for Capital Metro what would be the approximate cost of replanting trees on Northbourne Avenue.

In his response, the minister noted that it would be inappropriate to provide commentary on elements of capital metro, noting that such information is commercial in confidence. It is commercial in confidence to say how much it is going to cost to replant trees on Northbourne Avenue. If that kind of detail is going to be withheld from the people of Canberra, there is little hope that we are going to see the full picture for this project, which is going to cost well over \$1 billion when you take into account the construction, operation, maintenance and financing costs. They will not even say the cost of replanting trees.

Of course, this is a government that has a very bad track record when it comes to transparency, particularly in relation to capital metro. When I introduced this bill I noted some of the government's rhetoric in relation to capital metro. The government claims transparency with the release of the business case. However, the release of the business case is a smokescreen designed to bat away well-informed criticism. Commenting on the business case, respected economist Dr Leo Dobes said that there was "a disturbing lack of facts on the table".

The University of Canberra's Professor Phil Lewis also noted:

The cost-benefit analysis that's been done has not been very transparent.

The government's commitment to transparency was on display recently with the release of Professor Vickerman's review of the business case. Pointedly, in his first paragraph, Professor Vickerman notes:

The Review focuses on the broad approach to the Business Case, rather than an audit of the detailed data or values used.

That was a business case that was strategically withheld for approximately 18 months. This is a government that Mr Rattenbury has given his full endorsement to with regard to transparency and open government. Indeed, the government would not even let Professor Vickerman, a person that it had contracted to review the capital metro business case, see the detailed data on which the business case was based. This is also true for Professor Derek Scrafton, another government-commissioned expert who examined the business case. It is incredible and certainly contrary to the government's rhetoric that their own commissioned experts were not given access to data underpinning the business case.

As a practical example of this government's transparency regarding capital metro, I wish to note a recent example of a freedom of information request I lodged with the government. In September last year I asked the Capital Metro Agency under FOI if they could provide their patronage modelling. Patronage is, obviously, a key

consideration when deciding to proceed with this specific project and it is described in the capital metro business case. Given the large costs of the project, it is proper that the government is able to justify the figures in their business case.

After 216 days I finally received a copy of the patronage modelling used by the government in the business case. This was after having my initial request declined on three separate occasions. Quite simply, this is not indicative of a government committed to transparency and it provides a practical case in point as to why my legislation today is required. More cynically, it is also an example of what the government is going to do in order to stop more attempts to get to the bottom of this project.

I recognise that people may have concerns with the application of this bill. As I stated, I was happy and willing to discuss this matter with government ministers. The bill was primarily about the financial ramifications of the project. I was more than happy to negotiate with members or with ministers to ensure that trade secrets or intellectual property were not captured by this bill. I stated that in my presentation speech. To this end, I offered to work with government members who had concerns about my bill. It is disappointing that neither Labor nor the Greens has taken me up on that offer. It goes to show that this is a government that is all talk, no action when it comes to transparency. Of course, Mr Rattenbury's FOI bill, which he tabled as an exposure draft in 2013 looks like it is going to come on for a vote in the last session of this Assembly, deliberately so that he—Mr Rattenbury—will get out of any transparency related to the very bill he is putting forward.

If he were serious, there would not be a two and a half year consultation period. It would have been discussed and voted upon two years ago. Then this government would have been held to account under the very rules that Mr Rattenbury is advocating. Instead, Mr Rattenbury is strategically, in effect, getting out of adhering to the rules which he will be advocating.

There is another thing worth noting about what Mr Rattenbury contributed to this debate. He said, of course, that it was not principled to have special rules for capital metro; that it was not appropriate to have a set of provisions that applied to capital metro contracting which would be distinct from all other contracts. He said that it is not even a class of projects. It is a single project and, therefore, it was not principled to have a discussion based on a single project.

That therefore begs the question of how it is that Mr Rattenbury voted for the Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. This was not a principled piece of legislation; this was not even for a class of projects. This was for a single project. This was a project facilitation bill to roll out the red carpet for capital metro. There was nothing principled about it.

Mr Rattenbury can come in here and say that my bill is unprincipled because it goes by a single project. What did he do when he voted for the Planning and Development (Capital Metro) Legislation Amendment Bill 2014? Did Mr Rattenbury stand up in this place and say, "No, I can't possibly support that. I can't possibly support picking a single project"? Did he say, "No, projects like this should not be singled out. If

you've got to make changes like this, it should be made across the territory"? Of course he did not. Mr Rattenbury picks and chooses his principles depending on the debate of the day. That is not good enough. It is not good enough for someone who claims to be a champion of transparency and open government.

We are not at all surprised that those opposite are blocking every single attempt to bring some light to this project. We are extremely disappointed, but we will continue to do all we can to bring light to projects such as capital metro, to get to the bottom of dodgy procurement deals with UnionsACT. This is a government that cannot be trusted, and at least by voting against this legislation today they are putting their money where their mouth is and proving that they are not a transparent entity.

Question put:

That the bill be agreed to in principle.

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	Mr Hinder
Mr Hanson		Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Jones		Mr Corbell	

Question so resolved in the negative.

Older Canberrans

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (3.57): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the 2011 Census recorded 38 159 ACT residents or 11 percent of the population, are aged 65 and over;
- (b) from June 2012 to June 2013, the ACT had the second highest percentage increase in the 65 years plus population;
- (c) the 2015 Inter-Generational Report predicts that aged workforce participation (65+) will rise to 17.3 percent from 12.9 percent over the next 40 years;
- (d) by 2055, life expectancy at birth will be 85.1 years for men and 96.6 years for women in Australia;
- (e) the Chief Minister at his recent State of the Territory address failed to make any mention of Canberra's senior population; and

- (f) that at the event at which the address was delivered, the Chief Minister implied, in response to a question, that seniors were becoming a problem in the ACT because they chose to stay in Canberra, when previously they retired to the coast, thus posing a future burden on the ACT economy; and
- (2) calls on the Chief Minister to:
- (a) apologise to Canberra's seniors' population for the disrespect he has shown them;
 - (b) recognise the important contribution that seniors have made to the ACT economy;
 - (c) acknowledge the vital role that seniors continue to play within the ACT economy and social community;
 - (d) provide reassurance to ACT seniors that he and the ACT Government do not support ageist policies and attitudes;
 - (e) ensure equal employment opportunity practices, including for seniors, are applied within the ACT Public Service; and
 - (f) ensure Government policies and practices identify and appropriately support the needs of ACT seniors.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I am pleased to bring forward this motion today to draw attention to a section of our community that has been increasingly overlooked by the current government. That sector is our seniors. When I talk of seniors, I am using the ABS definition, which is those persons aged 65 years and over. As my motion points out, the most recent census in 2011 recorded 38,159 ACT residents, or 11 per cent of the population, aged 65 and over.

Earlier this year the ABS published some interesting facts about Australia's ageing population. Not only has the median age of Australians risen by four years, but in Canberra we have the second fastest growing percentage of seniors and we also have the second highest growth in the number of Canberrans aged over 85 years.

While it is true that Canberra has the second lowest median range of all states and territories, we know that there is still 11 per cent of our population in the seniors bracket. And, perhaps particularly relevant for Mr Barr in this election year, in some suburbs in his electorate that percentage is even higher. For example, in Red Hill the percentage is 16.9 per cent; in Narrabundah, 15 per cent; in Lyneham, 14.6 per cent; and in Hackett, 16.8 per cent. In fact, the majority of the suburbs in Mr Barr's electorate have a higher percentage of seniors than the Canberra average.

So when our Chief Minister delivers an important address such as his state of the territory address, which had many stirring sentiments and inspirational goals, it is more than disappointing that nowhere in that oration did the word "seniors" appear. He said:

In today's highly mobile world, simply being the seat of Government isn't enough to attract the world's best and brightest any more.

We need to offer the lifestyle, event and housing options that people want.

We are already the world's most liveable city, so we start with a significant advantage.

He spoke about creating a more economically self-reliant Canberra that drives job creation in emerging industries and by conceiving of Canberra as a true "knowledge capital" where our world-class universities have structural advantages over their Australian and international competitors.

This is all good, and it is what we would expect from a Chief Minister. We want him talking up the territory, unlike what he has done today in predicting gloom and doom for Canberra when even his immediate predecessor had to admit this morning that in the coming year we will not see massive job cuts for Canberra. But in all of the address, not once—not once—did the Chief Minister make any mention of Canberra's senior population. And, Mr Barr, it was noticed.

This address was a key statement about the ambition and vision the Chief Minister has for the future of Canberra, and one of our most vulnerable and growing demographics failed to rate a mention. If this was not bad enough already, the Chief Minister went on to imply, in response to a question, that seniors were becoming a problem in the ACT because they chose to stay in Canberra, when previously they retired to the coast, thus posing a future burden on the ACT economy.

The Chief Minister's scathing and divisive remarks about seniors in that response to a question at his state of the territory address disappointed many across the community, including the ACT Council of Social Service, ACTCOSS, who tweeted after the address: "Not keen at all on the generation divide and conflict being spruiked by Andrew Barr in the State of the Territory address."

ACTCOSS, like many others in our community, have recognised that there is a growing generational divide being created by the Chief Minister, and the concerns relate not just to his comments but to the example this sets to his ministers and government. It is not exactly the kind of unbiased leadership that we all expect from the Chief Minister of this territory.

There was a clear presumption in his talk that the future for Canberra and future needs for Canberra revolved around younger members of our community. Mr Barr has highlighted in committee meetings that the largest demographic in Canberra is people aged 20 to 24. Given that we are home to five universities or representative campuses and a multisite technology institute that attracts residential students, that should come as no surprise. And it is important that we continue to offer educational opportunities of a high standard and to promote these opportunities for the current generation and also to recognise their importance and their future contributions in the ACT. But, Mr Barr, it need not be and—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, sit down for a moment. Please address your remarks through the chair, not to Mr Barr.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Madam Assistant Speaker, Mr Barr should be aware that it need not be and should not be at the expense and exclusion of our older residents. As people age they often become more vulnerable and averse to change. So when a government decides to review a concession program, such as the ACT did recently, many of our seniors become anxious. They also needed to be patient, because it would seem that the minister for seniors is in no hurry to allay their fears.

When a government announces changes to stamp duty, and then lifts rates way beyond CPI, people become anxious. In suburbs like Yarralumla, with a seniors percentage of nearly 20 per cent, they worry because their rates this year have risen 10.3 per cent. In Downer they have gone up 12.3 per cent, in Campbell 10 per cent, in Red Hill 10 per cent. The list goes on. No suburb had increases close to the CPI; in fact, most rate rises were three to four times above the CPI.

Our older residents are feeling overlooked and neglected by this government. To be honest, I cannot blame them. The government boasts that Canberra is an “age friendly city”, yet it would appear that it is doing everything within its power to prove otherwise. Changes to the concessions program, rate hikes and a slow response to safety issues like footpath repairs and street lighting upgrades are all affecting our ageing population. Often when I make a representation on behalf of my constituents, I find there is no money for footpath repairs or that the issue has been noted and will be monitored.

But there is money for light rail, apparently. Assuming our senior residents in Gungahlin can walk to catch a tram to the city to shop, or vice versa, they will get some benefit. But there is a presumption that in most cases there will be a walk of two to three blocks just to get to a stop. It is not surprising that older residents in suburbs like Downer, Dickson and O’Connor have serious reservations about any advantage that light rail might mean for them.

Canberra number plates proclaim “Canberra—age friendly city”, yet we have a Chief Minister who is rapidly establishing a reputation that contradicts this very registration slogan.

As one within the ABS category of seniors, I know only too well the Chief Minister’s ageist attitudes. I have been the recipient of some of these jibes from Mr Barr over the years. I recall that when I was asking questions about the Westside pop-up village, what I have often referred to as the Lake Burley Griffin shipping container terminal, Mr Barr replied somewhat sneeringly that I need not worry about the success or failure of the venture because:

... its target demographic is younger than Mr Doszpot and, indeed, younger than AM radio listeners, generally speaking, and perhaps even the audience of the print edition of the *Canberra Times*.

However, this motion is not about me. I have become quite used to Mr Barr's peculiar sense of humour and his often quite scathing and disrespectful sarcasm. This motion is about the older members of our community who do take Mr Barr's disrespect to heart, those seniors who fail to see the humour in his condescending and cavalier attitude, an attitude which is, sadly, becoming his trademark. After all, he is also their Chief Minister and they expect him to accept and stand up for all members of the community.

It is a pity that the Chief Minister seems to echo the attitudes of one of his former ministerial colleagues, one of Mr Barr's former mentors and employers, the former MLA John Hargreaves. Mr Hargreaves has in the past made some particularly savage attacks on Canberra community councils, referring to their members as "geriatrics". It would seem that Mr Hargreaves has not given up his ageist rants if his recent missive in *RiotACT* is any indication.

The Chief Minister is also on record with similar views to community councils. Chief Minister Barr has told us and community councils across Canberra quite clearly what he thinks of them. He said recently:

The idea that a community council is in any way representative, given that most of the attendees are of one particular gender in some councils and, again, way out of connect with the demographic distribution of people living in particular regions, is another example of where communication ... need to be much broader.

We know that Mr Barr and his government take little notice of community concerns and only pay lip service to any notion of community consultation. But if he believes that these organisations are not representative and reflective of the community, I will remind him again about the statistics for some of his electorate suburbs—suburbs, coincidentally, in which there are active community councils. There is Red Hill, with 16.9 per cent of the suburb's residents aged over 65; Downer, with 13.5 per cent; Yarralumla, with 19.2 per cent; and Forrest, with 14.7 per cent—all areas with current disputes with Mr Barr's government.

One thing everyone in Canberra has in common, and that includes Mr Barr, is that we are all getting older. As offensive as Mr Barr may find the proposition, I can assure him that I do not prefer the alternative. I do not think it is too much to ask the Chief Minister, Mr Barr, to reflect on his ageist attitudes. As shadow minister for the ageing, that is what I am asking him to do in this motion. I ask that he "recognise the important contributions that seniors have made to the ACT economy"; "acknowledge the vital role that seniors continue to play within the ACT economy and social community"; "provide reassurance to ACT seniors that he and the ACT Government do not support ageist policies and attitudes"; "ensure equal employment opportunity practices, including for seniors, are applied within the ACT Public Service"; and

finally “ensure Government policies and practices identify and appropriately support the needs of ACT seniors”.

Through you, Madam Assistant Speaker, for Mr Barr’s benefit, I have raised this motion with some regret. Mr Barr should have been alerted by his own minister for seniors about the angst that he has generated in our senior community in the ACT.

Throughout my life I have had a personal motto that has served me well over the years: respect for the past and a vision for the future. I respectfully suggest to Mr Barr that he consider showing some respect for the valuable past and present contributions of our seniors, who have paved the way so that the current and future residents of Canberra may benefit from the legacy that they have left behind.

Such a legacy is now being played out in the English Premier League by Leicester City, which has a football team coached by one of the league’s oldest coaches, Claudio Ranieri. Leicester City has just become the English Premier League champions at odds of 5,000 to one. Claudio Ranieri is 64 years old. He was brought into the club because of his considerable experience as a coach. He was tasked with ensuring that Leicester City would not be relegated from the Premier League. His talent and experience were such that he took his young charges to the very top. Through you, Madam Speaker, I say to Mr Barr that it does give truth to the saying that “youth is the gift of nature, but age is a work of art”.

I commend this 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) (4.11): As Minister for Veterans and Seniors, I am particularly keen to make sure that our seniors continue to play an active role in the ACT economy and the social fabric of our community. In my reply to Mr Doszpot’s motion I would like to highlight and focus on some of the positive initiatives this government is taking to maintain and enhance opportunities for seniors in our community.

Firstly, it is important that we understand the demographic backdrop. Although the ACT population is relatively young by national standards, like other jurisdictions across Australia and many countries around the world the ACT population is ageing. The statistics indicate that Canberra is likely to move into a demographic environment that is entirely unfamiliar to us. This profound shift in the age structure of Canberra’s population over the coming decades will reveal itself in many ways.

The government’s population projections show an ageing population, with the percentage of Canberrans aged over 65 years set to double from the 2012 level of 11 per cent to 22.5 per cent in 2062. The intergenerational report released by the commonwealth Treasury on 5 March 2015 identifies that life expectancy is expected to significantly increase. The number of Australians aged 65 years is projected to double by 2055 and will include over 40,000 people aged 100 years and over. By 2055 men can expect to live on average to at least 95 years and women to 96 years.

An ageing population will have a range of economic, social and fiscal implications for the ACT. However, it is important to recognise that an ageing population also presents new and exciting opportunities for the territory. In this context active ageing represents opportunities for older people to continue to work, stay healthy for longer and contribute to our community.

As a government we acknowledge the effects of ageing in the ACT and are exploring some of the policy issues arising from those effects. The ACT active ageing framework 2015-18 was developed following extensive community engagement with hundreds of seniors in 2014 and 2015. A framework and associated action plan set out very clearly the ACT government's guiding principles and priorities for seniors. They provide guidance to ACT government directorates and require them to incorporate active ageing principles into mainstream policies such as health, transport, employment, housing and social inclusion. I am confident that the implementation of the framework and the initiatives outlined in the associated action plan over the next three years will bear many positive benefits for seniors and the Canberra community alike, now and into the future.

This government is committed to delivering the key objectives outlined in the plan. A key focus for the government is the implementation of the initiative contained in the action plan which seeks to investigate the possibility of vertical seniors accommodation being developed close to shops and other vital services and facilities. This key initiative complements the ACT government's commitment to make Canberra a more age-friendly city and will inform the best configuration of accommodation to meet the needs of seniors into the future.

This initiative will also complement the work currently being undertaken by the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate in implementing the age-friendly suburbs project, delivering a program of age-friendly improvements in the suburbs of Ainslie, Weston, Monash and Kaleen. The age-friendly active travel improvements at Ainslie and Weston are part of this \$750,000 age-friendly suburbs project. The project will deliver a program of active travel infrastructure and open space improvements to the four pilot suburbs over a two-year period.

The Territory and Municipal Services Directorate has identified the suburbs of Ainslie and Weston to trial infrastructure improvements with a view to implementing similar improvements across Canberra in the future. These are likely to include construction of new pathways, lighting in some underpasses, provision of safer road crossing facilities and the provision of seating at locations adjacent to community facilities. These age-friendly improvements for Ainslie and Weston are to be constructed by the end of June 2016. Improvements for the suburbs of Monash and Kaleen will be designed and constructed in the 2016-17 financial year.

The ACT government continues to champion Canberra as an age-friendly city, incorporating design features and housing options that encourage older people to remain physically and socially active, to maintain a healthy lifestyle, to be socially engaged and to explore opportunities that will provide new life experiences as our seniors age.

Another significant initiative is the upcoming seniors health roundtable on Wednesday, 11 May 2016, which has been organised by the ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing. The roundtable is the result of feedback from seniors at the older persons assembly in 2015 that additional time is required to discuss health-related issues specific to ACT seniors and is also a key action to be addressed in the framework.

The strength of the roundtable process will hopefully enable us to effectively tap into the wide range of opinions and ideas that exist amongst the delegates who have been invited to attend, to find common ground and to forge a consensus within the diversity of topics, views and ideas. I look forward to the collation of expert submissions that will be fed into a consolidated report containing qualitative recommendations regarding health provisions for veterans and seniors that will be provided to me by the end of June 2016.

The ACT government is also committed to funding important community initiatives for Canberra seniors and continues to work in collaboration with community organisations such as the Council on the Ageing ACT through the provision of funding to support them in delivering the events and activities that are incorporated into the seniors week program, the ACT seniors card program and their membership databases. These initiatives provide an opportunity for local seniors to be recognised and assist them to continue to access services and remain active in our community.

The annual *Life's Reflections* photographic competition and exhibition continues to promote positive community awareness of older people, the importance of older people maintaining healthy and active lifestyles, the importance and value of intergenerational relationships, and the emerging awareness of Canberra as an age-friendly city. The competition, which is now in its 13th year, has maintained a significant profile within the ACT community, attracting over 1,200 individual photographers of all ages to enter the competition since its inception.

Another significant point with regard to Canberra's ageing population is that people in this age bracket have relatively low labour force participation rates. It is for this reason that my predecessor, Minister Gentleman, tabled in the chamber last year the ACT mature workforce strategy statement of intent. This was developed by the ACT government in collaboration with the Illawarra Retirement Trust Foundation and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

The benefits for older Canberrans of enjoying a long and active life and a better standard of health than ever before will influence their decision to remain in the workforce for a longer period of time, well after they reach the current traditional retirement age. The continuity of employment in their lives as mature age workers can foster new levels of pride and self-worth to an individual and develop a valuable flow-on effect, with the productive output of mature age workers contributing to the economic prosperity of Canberra and of course Australia as a whole.

This government recognises that older Canberrans may wish at some point to transition from paid work to other productive activity, such as supporting their

families, volunteering and getting involved in community activities. It is with this mindset that the ACT government recognised that it has to be about choice, and to make sure that government, business, community organisations and individuals value the benefit of older people participating in our economic and social life.

The ACT government is committed to supporting and effectively responding to the needs of mature age workers. We are achieving this by working with a broad range of community partners to develop mature age workforce solutions across Canberra. Our range of mature employment initiatives in the ACT must ensure that the valuable corporate knowledge, skills and work expertise of our mature age workers are not lost to the ACT workforce.

The statement of intent endeavours to create a collaborative framework with a focus on activities in the ACT which have the potential to deliver improved employment outcomes across the age spectrum and which maximise active engagement, access and independence to the workforce in the ACT. The statement of intent brings together the ACT government, the Illawarra Retirement Trust Foundation, and the Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner and Ambassador for Mature Age Employment, the Hon Susan Ryan AO, to work collaboratively on a range of projects to tackle the issue of age discrimination in the workplace.

The upcoming ACT Career Check Up Expo on 29 June 2016 for mature workers aims to do that, and perhaps Mr Doszpot could take advantage. The Career Check Up Expo is an initiative of the Illawarra Retirement Trust Foundation and is being delivered in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission and the ACT government to provide seniors with a one-stop shop for planning their future and getting the right advice about working and retirement.

The ACT government recognises that Canberra is a town that is constantly evolving, and is being shaped and refined to become a living and sustainable environment that will provide our older Canberrans with an exceptional quality of life in an age-friendly city.

Mr Doszpot's motion suggests that the government is ageist. Far from it. The initiatives I have outlined today are a hallmark of a government that works with its seniors to identify opportunities to enhance the lives of our older citizens. This government will continue to improve outcomes for the ACT's seniors in economic and social participation by getting on with the job of implementing the ACT active ageing framework. I move the following amendment that has been circulated in my name:

Omit all words after "notes", substitute:

- “(a) the ACT has one of the fastest growing populations of people aged 65 and over in Australia and that this trend is expected to continue;
- (b) the barriers currently experienced by some mature age workers, preventing them from gaining meaningful employment; and

(c) the extensive community consultation carried out to inform the *ACT Active Ageing Framework 2015-2018* which expresses the Government's guiding principles and priorities for ACT seniors over the next four years; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to continue to improve outcomes for ACT seniors by implementing the *ACT Active Ageing Framework 2015-2018* as outlined in the *ACT Active Ageing Action Plan*."

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (4.23): I thank, firstly, Mr Doszpot for raising this motion today and Dr Bourke for his amendment and contribution. There are a number of elements to Mr Doszpot's motion and his speech that I can agree with. There are others where I feel grievously misrepresented, but I will come to that in due course. It is indeed acknowledged, Madam Speaker, that—

Mr Coe: And everyone who feels grievously misrepresented smiles while saying it.

MR BARR: That is right. The 2011 census did indeed record 38,159 ACT residents, or 11 per cent of the population, aged 65 or over. I have absolutely no doubt that the 2015 intergenerational report is correct when it predicts that there will be a requirement for those 65 and over to continue to participate in the workforce and that over the next 40 years you will see an increase.

I anticipate being part of that cohort, because over the next 40 years I will, like many people in this place, move into that cohort of being 65 years or over. As Mick Jagger and Keith Richards wrote in 1974, "Time waits for no-one, no favours has he." It is indeed true, I agree, Mr Doszpot; we are all getting older.

I am prepared to accept on face value what is stated in paragraph 1(d), that life expectancy will indeed increase by 2055. I am a little concerned that the gap between men and women will grow to 11 years. I hope that is not the case and there is a typo in the motion. Regardless, it is not a significant point. Nonetheless, I think the point you are trying to make is that life expectancy will continue to increase, and that is certainly the case.

In my recent state of the territory address I spoke at length, as Mr Doszpot indicated, about a number of important things for the city of Canberra. Because I delivered that address and I was actually there, I know what I said. That will probably put me in a better position to be able to advise the Assembly of what I said and what I said in response to questions afterwards.

But let me quote some elements of the speech that are, of course, on the public record. I spoke of a vision for Canberra that relies on no-one's efforts but our own. Mr Doszpot acknowledged that. I spoke of this city being one of the world's most liveable and competitive cities. I went on to say that it was important that it was welcoming to all. I mean that, Madam Assistant Speaker: welcoming to all.

In the context of the speech, I spoke about the statement of ambition that we launched at that time, I spoke about a number of senior Canberrans who had been involved in the development of that statement of ambition, and I spoke about it being the key document that I would use to promote Canberra to the world. I spoke about our ambition and our advantage.

I particularly acknowledged at the start of the speech the attendance of the leaders of our higher education sector, and I paid particular tribute to a senior Canberran who left his post just this week. We had a farewell for him. I refer to Professor Stephen Parker, who I think now comes under the definition that Mr Doszpot has put forward: a senior Canberran.

I acknowledged the significant contribution that Professor Parker has made to this city over an extended period of time. I think it is a little unfair to suggest that my comments in the state of the territory address were in any way ageist or in fact in any way neglected any sector of the ACT. In fact, I spoke about all people. I spoke about the advantage that our city has; I spoke about the need to grow our higher education sector; and I said—and I repeat—that I believe a strong and ambitious higher education sector benefits everyone.

Mr Doszpot: Which I complemented you on.

MR BARR: Thank you. I acknowledged the vision and hard work of Professor Stephen Parker. This is what I said:

I can't emphasise this too strongly: to win as a city, we must win *people*.

In today's highly mobile world, simply being the seat of Government isn't enough to attract the world's best and brightest any more.

We need to offer the lifestyle, event and housing options that people want.

We are already the world's most liveable city, so we start with a significant advantage.

I was asked in the question session afterwards how I viewed the ageing of the population, how that would fit within the context of attraction and retention of people and what that would mean for Canberra's future. I made the observation that one of the contributing factors in my view to the reason that Canberra has one of the fastest growing populations over 65, as Mr Doszpot has incorrectly alluded to in his motion, is that people are choosing to stay in Canberra. That has been one of the great things about the city turning 100.

Mr Coe: What a burden!

MR BARR: No, I never said that.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: No need to respond across the chamber.

MR BARR: I am sorry. I never said that, Madam Assistant Speaker. I pointed out that I thought there were three factors that were driving that change in demographics. First is much stronger family connections, the fact that there are successive generations of people who have family in this city, people who were born here now, and who want to retire here because their kids and grandkids are here. That is different about Canberra in 2016 than might have been the case in the 1970s and 1980s when, as I said, people tended to come here for work and retire back to where they came from. Now people are from Canberra and they want to stay here.

I also, somewhat amusingly, observed that the best and cheapest real estate has already been acquired on the south coast. So the opportunity of downsizing, selling your house in Canberra and being able to buy something fantastic on the south coast has been taken by a previous generation. I also observed—I think this is correct—that the health services and the availability of services here in Canberra are significantly better than what is available on the New South Wales south coast. I think that is a credit to this government. We have put in place a series of community, health and other services that make Canberra a place that people want to retire to. That is a good thing.

I was then asked what that would mean for the city's economy. The point I made in response is that I find myself—I was then 42 but now I am 43—nearly 10 years older now than the median age of a Canberran. So it would be very important in the future for those of us who were above the median age and who wanted to retire here, wanted to maintain our enviable lifestyle, to support the next generation who will undoubtedly be providing the services and working in the jobs that will allow us to maintain that very enviable lifestyle. That, in fact, will be an economic contributor, not a burden, as has been implied by people who were not even there.

I think that is the thing I find most disturbing about Mr Doszpot's motion. He was not there. Mr Coe was not there. Yet what they are asserting is fundamentally untrue. The fact that I got large and spontaneous applause from those who attended for my response on that question, one of the largest applauses I got out of many in the speech, is testimony to the fact that my answer was, in fact, accurate and reflected the mood of the meeting and the context of the speech.

But that there is tension between generations from time to time is something that even Bob Dylan wrote about in 1964 in his famous *The times they are a-changin'* song. He said:

Come senators, congressmen, please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside and it's ragin'
It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'

And I go on:

The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast

The slow one now will later be fast
As the present now will later be past
The order is rapidly fadin'
And the first one now will later be last

The times, Madam Deputy Speaker, they are a-changin'.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.33): I thank Mr Doszpot for bringing this motion today and providing the opportunity to discuss the issues of Canberra's older generations, the seniors of the city, our—there are a series of tags that we have used for them—people who are getting on in years. As Mr Doszpot has identified in his motion, Canberra is becoming an older community, and that is true of both our city and of Australia generally. The population is ageing, and that presents a range of interesting and challenging policy questions for all of us to contemplate let alone the issues that personally one needs to contemplate as one reaches that stage of life.

It raises a series of important questions which this place needs to discuss as we think about how to embrace that fact, how we design our city to cope with it, what services we will need and the many other questions that arise from that changing demographic profile of our population.

Governments certainly need to work to create new policies, programs and initiatives to address the needs of our ageing population, and it is important that, in our case, the government works to ensure that Canberra is a city in which our older members feel valued and can fulfil their lives as they wish to.

Members will recall that in September 2011 the ACT government convened Australia's first older persons assembly right here in this chamber. Anyone who was there will never forget the day. Certainly some of the antics of that day were quite memorable. That was a result of efforts by my Greens colleague Amanda Bresnan during her time at the Assembly to bring about that first older persons assembly. She did that because she wanted to provide a specific forum in which the issues unique to older people could get an airing in a place central to the government of this city.

Two further older persons assemblies were subsequently included in the parliamentary agreement between the Greens and the Labor Party that I signed with the Chief Minister at the start of this term. That was because we agreed that there was real value in continuing that notion. As it happened, I became the Minister for Ageing at the start of this term, and during that time the ministerial advisory council on ageing discussed with me the idea that one of those older persons assemblies might become, in fact, an age-friendly cities and communities conference, which we went on to organise. It was held at the University of Canberra and aimed to better understand how the needs of older people could be best taken into consideration when planning our city and the delivery of services.

Delegates shared ideas and discussed work that was being done in other cities. They canvassed the World Health Organisation's age-friendly cities guidelines. The ACT is a signatory to that program, and that provides us with a framework to operate within. There was certainly a lot of discussion of what that means for a city and how that

practically rolls out. I thought that was a very interesting discussion and it elicited a whole lot of ideas.

Being an age-friendly city is not just about infrastructure; it is also about attitude, it is about the provision of services, it is about cultural issues and a whole range of things. Over 40 local governments from across Australia were present at that event as well as five state governments, and each of them brought some unique perspectives. Some common themes came up in what I thought was a very valuable discussion.

In terms of infrastructure, out of that conference came the idea for age-friendly suburbs, which Dr Bourke has talked about today. These are suburbs that have been identified as having a high proportion of elderly residents and are targeted for infrastructure improvements to make it easier, more convenient and more accessible for older residents to move in and around their community.

I embraced this idea because it does a couple of things. An age-friendly suburb is generally a people-friendly suburb when it comes to infrastructure. The idea that we could make a suburb through its infrastructure easier for people to get around makes a lot of sense. It plays out for old people who are perhaps not as confident in their walking or who, in fact, rely on a pusher or some sort of other mobility device, which then actually applies to parents pushing prams and all sorts of things as well. I want to make the point that an age-friendly city is, in fact, a great city to live in because it brings into play a lot of factors that benefit more members of the community, even though it is particularly driven and motivated by trying to support the older members of our community.

In terms of the age-friendly suburbs initiative, Weston and Ainslie were identified as the first on the list with Kaleen and Monash coming next, as Dr Bourke mentioned. The process involved an initial audit and then consultation was undertaken by the Council on the Ageing outsourced from government as a partnership exercise. Again, having gone to the recent presentation of the report, having COTA involved as a partner with the government was particularly beneficial. The key findings identified issues such as narrow and incomplete path segments, non-compliant wheelchair ramps, few places to rest and even issues of reduced visibility due to overhanging vegetation.

There is now money allocated for that project. Dr Bourke has spoken about that today. Part of my enthusiasm for embracing it was that if we can get some older suburbs right and retrofit them, then we can roll it out into other suburbs because we will have trained the government how to do these things and also it will shape future design considerations as new suburbs are built and some of these considerations are put into place.

During my time as Minister for Housing I worked with a group of elderly housing residents to deliver changes to the affordable rental scheme creating a more flexible and responsive system for the calculation of rent. It had become apparent that a flat percentage of market rate did not suit the real-world situation that many elderly tenants faced. Based on this feedback, I asked Housing ACT to undertake a review of the scheme, which found that a staged or level approach is more flexible and appropriate to the varying needs of older tenants.

The new scheme has six rental levels relating to a tenant's household income and capacity to pay and will allow flexibility as the circumstances of individuals change. The group of people affected by this was relatively small, but I cite the example as underlining the fact that so many things that matter for older members of our community often do not make the front page of the paper. They do not become the subject of awards or anything; they are small and practical things that can and should be done.

Certainly when I was the minister for TAMS there was a range of other practical things. Despite Mrs Dunne giving it a bit of a shellacking this morning, the launch of the flexible bus service has been well embraced by the community. Designed specifically for residents such as the aged and people with disabilities, the free bus service is a fantastic way to enhance social inclusion across Canberra. It has been a roaring success and saw over 12,000 trips clocked up in the first 12 months. It offers a basic timetable but provides the opportunity for residents to be picked up from home and taken to the places they need to go, and many people have found this very beneficial. There are regulars who have used the service every week since it started, with most of the passengers being over 80 years old. The oldest registered passenger is a 101-year-old lady who was still living independently at last advice. Opening up those opportunities is really important.

In the housing space one area in which we have not made enough progress in this city and which is a source of ongoing frustration for me is the use of adaptable housing design. Housing ACT uses it in an increasing number of properties, and that is a very positive thing. But we have not seen a significant uptake of adaptable housing design in the private sector. I had an animated discussion on this with the Master Builders Association one day at one of their president's lunches and we debated the merits of it.

I talked to them about my inclination or, I guess, my contemplation of whether we should mandate a minimum percentage of houses to meet certain standards of adaptability. Their response was, "No, we don't want that. It will drive up costs unnecessarily. Leave it to the market." I have not seen any revised figures in recent times, but I am not convinced that we are reaching a point where we have enough adaptable housing in our stock, and this is a place where further work is needed.

Just yesterday in this place I tabled both a report on the retirement villages review and also a bill that amends the Retirement Villages Act. As I said yesterday, I am very pleased with the outcome of this process. It is a great example of engaging stakeholders, and there are some great stakeholders in that space. The residents of some of our retirement villages around town are very highly skilled from their professional backgrounds and from their life experience and they have brought a lot to the table in terms of sorting that out. The snippet about that in today's paper was probably about five centimetres by five centimetres, and I do not think that matches how important this matter is to people in Canberra.

The Retirement Villages Act covers key elements of that industry to make sure that residents of those villages get a fair deal and that the operators can operate within a framework that they understand. It is about making sure our older residents are able to

have security as they go into that phase of their life. Again, that is something that will make a real difference for people in Canberra as they go into that phase of their life.

I have highlighted some of these examples simply to underline the diversity of issues that impact on the older residents of our community. I am sure it is far from an exhaustive list; there are so many other things. I say that so that no-one critiques me for having left something out. I simply offer some broad-ranging examples of the sorts of areas in my own time in this place that I have worked on that have been relevant to older members of the city and which we have been able to make some progress on.

When I was the Minister for Ageing I was very struck by how many older people talked to me about the issue of voluntary euthanasia. I am going to bring it up here. It is a conversation that makes some people uncomfortable, and it certainly was not something I expected to talk about as the Minister for Ageing because I felt there would be sensitivity about it. But I was struck by how many people are contemplating that issue as they come to the later stages of their life and that this is something that is really prevalent in their minds. I know there are different views in this chamber, but I mention this because, as I say, I was struck by it. I am not saying every older person in Canberra was talking about it, but I was surprised by how many people were.

I encourage members to reflect on that issue as they think about an ageing population and the desire of modern people to have a respectful say in decisions about the end of their life. It is very real for us. With the wonders of modern medicine, so much intervention is capable of being made and many members of our community do not want that or they want the ability to draw a line on that intervention at a point which is about enabling them to die with the degree of dignity that they deserve.

On the specifics of Mr Doszpot's motion, I agree with many of the things he notes. I really have no interest in getting into his spat with Mr Barr about who said what when. This motion is about having a go at Mr Barr. I am not getting into that space; Mr Doszpot and Mr Barr can take that up.

In terms of what the motion calls on the government to do, there are some fair points in there, but, again, it is quite targeted at having a bit of a thing with Mr Barr, and that is why I will be supporting Dr Bourke's amendment. I think he picks up the key elements of Mr Doszpot's motion.

Mr Doszpot: Why don't you try to amend my motion yourself?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, can you please not interject—

Mr Doszpot: Why don't you just amend my motion?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot! Mr Rattenbury, please continue.

MR RATTENBURY: I will be supporting Dr Bourke's amendment; I think it picks up the key issue we are discussing here today. As I say, Mr Doszpot has a take on Mr Barr's commentary, and I have no interest in getting into that discussion. I am

interested in the practical things we can do. I have touched on a lot of those today; there are many more. These will be issues that will continue to occupy our minds—all of us—for some time to come. We have to be thinking about the specific needs of specific elements of our community. I assure you the ACT Greens and I are doing that, and you will see a reflection of that as we bring forward some of the ideas we have during this year's election campaign.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.47): I will talk to the amendment and eventually close. I will reflect on a couple of points Mr Barr made before I speak to Dr Bourke's amendment. Mr Barr is correct. I was not at his territory address but I am simply reflecting the views of many of the people who were there, who did listen to Mr Barr and who were offended by what they heard. If Mr Barr wishes to explain what he meant to say, then maybe he should use this motion as an opportunity to do that. But to simply stick to the statement that he just made here contradicting what a lot of other people said—it is not one or two, there are quite a few who have come to me because they have been very disappointed in what they heard Mr Barr saying—if that is where Mr Barr is going to leave it, I think it is rather unfortunate for Mr Barr.

But getting back to the amendment that Dr Bourke has put, while I appreciate the intent that Minister Bourke is attempting to deliver in this amendment—namely, protecting and supporting his Chief Minister—I do find it somewhat amusing that the only suggested action for the ACT government is to continue to implement the active ageing framework. Once again, they are not listening to what the community is saying. I am simply reflecting the views of the community.

Like so much of what this government produces, it is very long on rhetoric—and again we are talking about one of the many glossy brochures that the government produces—but it is very short on action and real action. This document is presumably what will guide and influence the Minister for Veterans and Seniors in his advocacy and support for his constituents. However, the pamphlet is likely to offend and frustrate many, particularly those seniors who are in the workforce and wish to remain in the workforce when this brochure uses the ABS's definition of mature age workers, not seniors. Mature age workers in that definition start at age 45, and Mr Barr is knocking on the door of that age group.

The goal of getting mature age workers supported in the workforce is probably quite easy to achieve in comparison. If 45 years of age is the starting point, I would suggest most senior level public servants are in that category. So for the minister to suggest that supporting mature age workers is the same as protecting jobs for seniors, then he needs to better understand his brief. Given the direction and focus of my motion today was to draw attention to the fact that we have an ageist Chief Minister leading this government, it might be more appropriate for Minister Bourke to seek an appointment with his Chief Minister to take him through his waffly pamphlet as a start to the Chief Minister's better understanding of the needs of seniors in the community.

It is obvious, while we are talking about the document, that neither the Chief Minister nor his minister for the ageing have read or understood this document, otherwise they would not have deleted 90 per cent of my motion, which covers some of the very issues that the active framework is also meant to be addressing and implementing.

The Chief Minister only wants to be seen at events and locations that attract younger members of our community but given a significant percentage of his own electorate are not in that demographic and they feel alienated by him, he needs to be making a better effort. This amendment actually goes nowhere near helping the community understand Mr Barr's impact as Chief Minister on behalf of the whole community.

Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, Mr Barr went through my motion point by point, and the people listening to Mr Barr's response were in no doubt about what Mr Barr said when he got to that part in the "notes" in my motion. And there are plenty of anecdotal stories about Mr Barr and the way he reflects on people who are a lot older than he is and the way that he does not necessarily want to communicate with them. I did not want to go into all of those details. I actually wanted to help bring this issue to Mr Barr's attention and hope that he would address the issues that are out there in the community and are quite serious from his point of view. But that is his choice, and I am rather saddened that he does not take note.

Madam Deputy Speaker, through you, over the years Mr Barr and I had quite a few interesting clashes when he was minister for education. I kept count of the number of backflips that Mr Barr performed, for which I coined the phrase Barr flip. But I respected Mr Barr's backflips. It showed that he actually listened and admitted when he could have done better, when he could have listened. Had he listened earlier, he could have made different decisions. But he backflipped, he compromised, he at least listened. What we are asking through this motion is for Mr Barr to actually consider what the community is saying to him, and if apologising is too difficult then I cannot give him any other advice. But I certainly would suggest that he do that.

It would be most appropriate for Mr Barr to perform another Barr flip and apologise for the statements and get on with doing his job of representing the whole community, including seniors, rather than censoring my motion through this outrageous amendment from Dr Bourke that would actually contradict the content of the ACT active ageing action plan. I will take you through the motion this afternoon.

Mr Barr has already gone through the "notes" and has agreed with most of the points that I made. He made some suggestion about a typo in one of them. But if we go past his view of the event at which he delivered that address and his view of what he said and those of the community, there is a discrepancy. I am not the one that is saying there is a discrepancy. I am simply reporting what the community said.

Apart from point (a) in part two of the motion in the "calls on the Chief Minister"—and this is where, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I suggested to Mr Rattenbury that if he wanted to be working for the seniors community he could either ask Mr Barr to apologise or ask for that number one point to be taken out if that is what he wanted to do—all of the other points in there are valid points. "Recognise the important contribution that seniors have made to the ACT economy". Why do we want to take that out? "Acknowledge the vital role that seniors continue to play within the ACT economy and social community". Why do you want to delete that, Dr Bourke, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker? "Provide reassurance to ACT seniors that he"—Mr Barr—"and the ACT Government do not support ageist policies and attitudes". You do not want to make that statement? "Ensure equal employment

opportunity practices”. You want to delete that? And “ensure Government policies and practices identify and appropriately support the needs of ACT seniors”.

It is just bizarre that we are talking about standing up for the seniors community and yet this is being censored, the life of this motion is being censored through Dr Bourke. It is about time that Dr Bourke stood up and represented some of the views that I have expressed here today. He is the minister for seniors, and it is his responsibility to also talk to the community, find out what they are saying and convince his Chief Minister that if he wants to represent the community in the way that a chief minister should represent all of his community, then that should be what Dr Bourke will need to tell Mr Barr.

We cannot accept the amendment, for all the reasons that I have just mentioned. I have got to say that I am very disappointed that Dr Bourke has chosen such a bizarre way of trying to make a point to the community that he represents.

Question put:

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

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Noes 8

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell

Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman
Mr Hinder
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
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.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—Indigenous detainees

MR WALL (Brindabella) (5.01): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the rise in numbers of Indigenous detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) according to recent data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS);
- (b) ongoing security breaches including the recent escape of a prisoner whilst receiving medical treatment at The Canberra Hospital; and
- (c) the total cost per prisoner per day at the AMC has reached \$421.26, the highest of any jurisdiction in Australia; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) report to the ACT Assembly on the findings of any investigation into the rise in the numbers of Indigenous detainees at the AMC by 30 June 2016; and
- (b) commit to implementing a thorough review of management and security practices at the AMC, with an objective to reducing the total cost per prisoner and subsequent impost on ACT taxpayers.

The motion I bring here today is once again aimed at highlighting the inconsistencies and failings of the ACT jail and corrections system in the ACT as a whole. I am well aware that I may be starting to sound like a broken record because of the number of times I have raised these issues in this place, but it is apparent to me that nothing has changed over the past four years or, indeed, since the jail was built.

The first highlighted issue in this motion relates to the skyrocketing increase in the rates of Indigenous detainees at the AMC: up 27 per cent in less than one year. I note that the minister for corrections has made the decision to launch an investigation into this alarming spike; however, this illustrates yet again the bandaid solutions and highly reactive approach to the issues facing the jail.

It is simply not acceptable to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continually over-represented in negative statistics, especially in a jurisdiction such as the ACT. An Aboriginal adult is currently 16 times more likely to be incarcerated in Australia while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent only three per cent of the total population. The question needs to be asked: why does more than 28 per cent of Australia's prison population identify as Indigenous?

I would not make a habit of agreeing with the former Labor Chief Minister Jon Stanhope. However, some of his recent comments on the increasing Indigenous incarceration rates and the cost to the taxpayer of the AMC have well and truly struck a chord. Why is it that the increasing cost per prisoner per day is yielding very little in the way of outcomes for the territory, particularly regarding the make-up of the prison population? And, most importantly, why is it not delivering the outcomes and the change in lifestyle that the detainees need so much?

Recently Mr Stanhope was quoted as saying this in the *Canberra Times*:

If it doesn't measure up, serious questions have to be asked about what management is doing with the very, very, generous funds they receive.

Mr Stanhope has implied publicly that the jail has "lost its way", and while Mr Rattenbury strenuously denies this assessment, he must at some level feel the same way. Mr Stanhope does, indeed, have a legacy to protect, but it must be galling for him to know that the most socially progressive of ministers in this government is in fact struggling with Mr Stanhope's own vision of a jail that was far removed from the punitive style of correctional facility adopted by every other jurisdiction in Australia.

Another issue that speaks once again to the inconsistencies of the management of the jail is that of the change to visiting hours. I have had a number of representations to my office regarding the changes to the way visits are undertaken at the jail. The message from each one of these is: why? Why? Why there is a need to change the practices there is still unknown. Why is there a need for change that does not in any way change efficiencies and administration of the jail but only serves to create new problems?

Recently the report on government services said the following:

A relatively high or increasing average time out-of-cells per day indicates better performance. The periods during which prisoners are not confined to their cells or units provides them with the opportunity to participate in a range of activities that may include work, education, wellbeing, recreation and treatment programs, the opportunity to receive visits, and interacting with other prisoners and staff.

The recent change to visiting hours has actually reduced the opportunity for detainees to receive time out of their cells, not increased it. Again, this is the evidence provided by those who know, those who are actually making the visits.

I have had numerous calls to my office and representations in the weeks leading up to this change, particularly this week since the changes came into effect over the weekend, with the families and friends of people who are serving a sentence at the AMC concerned by the significant reduction in opportunities to go and visit the ones that they care about. One such example was a gentleman who was seeking to visit his friend. Previously his friend, who is serving a prolonged sentence at the AMC, had up to nine hours available for visitors per week. That changed this week from nine hours down to two—two hours. That is going to further increase social isolation and further exacerbate the disconnect that prisoners in the AMC feel from the community on the outside. That will set them up ultimately to fail when they are released and make it a much harder opportunity to rehabilitate with a higher likelihood of seeing recidivist behaviour and recidivist statistics continuing to trend in the wrong direction in this jurisdiction.

Time after time we have seen media reports of security breaches at the AMC. Whilst these instances always make for good media stories and always manage to achieve some level of interest amongst the broader community, the instances themselves paint a picture of inconsistency and worry. The latest incidents involved a detainee receiving medical treatment having the opportunity to escape custody. Again, in isolation or even in comparison to other jurisdictions, this is not overly alarming as a one-off, regardless of how serious it is. It remains a significant issue. But in view of the bigger picture of how this corrections system is being run, this is just one example in a broad picture of consistent failings and further highlights the Canberra Liberals' calls for a review into security practices and procedures, relating not just to security but also to the administration and the policies that are implemented in the jail.

The current corrections minister has flat out dismissed the idea of a review of any kind at the AMC. In fact, he has gone so far as to say, "Why would we bother to do a review when we already know what the result would be?" The question then needs to

be asked: why are we not seeing any difference in the way that the prison is being managed or the outcomes that are being achieved?

The substantive part of my motion calls on the ACT government to report to the ACT Assembly on the findings of any investigation into the rise of numbers of Indigenous detainees at the AMC as well as calling once again for a commitment to implementing a thorough review of management and security practices at the AMC with an objective of reducing the total cost per prisoner and subsequent impost on ACT taxpayers but, most of all, improving the outcomes for the prisoners and their families.

We need to see where the money is going and how we can make the outcomes for all involved better. How can we ensure our security practices are consistent and effective? Where are improvements needed? Is the administration of the jail running an effective and efficient operation? What are the impediments stopping the ACT from being a benchmark for the nation? All of these questions need to be asked and answered. If only those opposite in the government were willing to ask them. Instead of being the worst in the nation, maybe some investigation, analysis, reflection and change would result in some consistency of practices out there and the ACT becoming the best in performance statistics that are released when it comes to corrective services.

I would like to stress that this is not a reflection on the staff as individuals but a reflection on the overall broader policies and procedures that are in operation at the jail. I believe firmly, from the discussions, the talks and the visits I have had at the prison, that the staff involved in the system are doing the best they can within the parameters under which they operate. The significant failings, I believe, stem from higher up in the ranks. Those at the coal face are doing the best they can with the tools they are equipped with.

The Canberra Liberals will ask the questions that need to be asked as to how the corrective services system is being run to make sure that we get the outcomes that the ACT community expects, that we receive value for money and, most importantly, that we get good outcomes for those involved in the system. All stakeholders deserve to be worked with collaboratively to achieve these outcomes and consistency.

The order of the day under the Canberra Liberal government will bring about the changes that are required. I do not believe that after 15 years of mismanagement those opposite are competent or capable of another four years.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Education, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs and Minister for Road Safety) (5.10): I am always pleased to stand up in this place and talk about ACT Corrective Services, the operation of the jail and the impact that it has on our detainees, because it is an area that the government and I take very seriously. There are a lot of positive things happening. There are certainly some challenging elements to this portfolio as well.

The motion before us today is a hodgepodge, grab-bag smear job that does no justice to the very serious issues it is seeking to eliminate, and I will not be supporting it as it stands. I have circulated an amendment, which I now move:

Omit all words after “notes”, substitute:

- “(a) the recent concerning rise in the number of Indigenous detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC), which has been reflected in data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics;
 - (b) the Minister for Corrections’ recent public comments regarding the need to better understand and respond to these increased rates of incarceration;
 - (c) the ACT escape from secure custody rates for 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 was zero. The 2015-16 year-to-date for escape from secure custody rate is in the order of 0.26 (noting that this is not the final figure and can vary depending on adjustments in detainee numbers across the reporting year);
 - (d) the real net operating expenditure, per prisoner per day over the past five years has reduced from \$355.37 to \$296.04 in 2014-15;
 - (e) the real net operating expenditure, per prisoner per day for 2015-16 year-to-date is \$282, and this figure accounts for significant investment in critical infrastructure; and
 - (f) the unique nature of the AMC in providing detention for both sentenced and remand detainees and male and female detainees, and all security classifications; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for Corrections to report back to the Assembly by the last sitting week of August on the result of any data analysis regarding the recent increase in Indigenous detainees at the AMC”.

In the interests of providing information to members of the Assembly and, through this place, to the broader community we serve, I have moved this amendment which I believe will go further towards providing useful data as well as underlining the challenges of working in the corrections portfolio.

There is a real and genuine concern in the community, and I am sure in this place as well, regarding the increase in the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration in the ACT. We have seen a spike in recent times. It has occurred quite quickly. The incarceration rate of Indigenous people in the territory is too high. It is lower than in other jurisdictions; nonetheless it is too high. As Mr Wall pointed out in his remarks, it is significantly higher than for the non-Indigenous community in this jurisdiction, as it is in other jurisdictions.

There has been much discussion about that for many years. Certainly, the ACT has seen a rapid increase in recent times. I am very concerned about that, and I was concerned about it before this motion came forward today. Mr Wall may be interested to learn that I have been looking at it for some time, indeed, before I was asked about it by the *Canberra Times* recently. That is why I was reported as saying that I had directed ACT Corrective Services to undertake some data analysis on its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, look at why they are in custody and provide

some data back to me and the Attorney-General, because between us we need to take this issue on.

I am happy to provide a report back to the Assembly on the progress of this work at a later date when it is available to me. I certainly intend to share it with a range of community stakeholders. We know—and it is important to reflect on this in this place—that the work of ACT Corrective Services is at the back end of the justice process. The AMC was built to house people detained in custody by order of the courts—people who have been charged with an offence by the police, people who have been brought into custody by the police for committing a criminal act in the community. So Corrective Services is only one of the players in the process of why Indigenous people end up in jail.

That is why I have asked Corrective Services to do the work on the offence profile of people who come to us and to share that work with the rest of the community. It is not something that Corrective Services alone can fix. We will certainly work hard to play our part in it, but it is an issue right across the community.

The AMC has a strong rehabilitation-focused culture that is embedded in the management of ACT Corrective Services. That is certainly a part of addressing incarceration rates. But these responsibilities are limited to what we can do with detainees once they have been sentenced, be that during their period of imprisonment in the AMC or while they are assisted through the highly valued extended through-care program or during the supervision of a community corrections order.

Once somebody is in custody with Corrective Services, there are a whole range of measures in place to try to assist people with their offending behaviour. Certainly, there are dedicated programs directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees are eligible for both the regular programs that are available to all detainees and there are targeted pieces of work that are culturally specific. This is work that has arisen from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody as a starting point and in many reports over the years. The current advice from members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT is that there are specific things we should be seeking to do for our Indigenous detainees.

Having said that, corrections ministers and departments are required to be responsive to the orders of the courts and the directions of the police, who are also tasked with the expectation of keeping the community safe. At the end of the day, corrections plays only one part in the system.

I believe we are generally doing a reasonable job of responding to these issues of crime and justice from the perspective of Corrective Services and the AMC, but it is clear that we as a government and the ACT as a community need to take stock of and quantify, if possible, what we may be able to do better. Having regard to all the things I have said, we must not rest, because we have seen this spike in the detainee population. I believe this is particularly true in relation to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and their persistent and growing over-representation in the

justice system is an issue that we cannot allow to rest. It is evident; we all know it. The trick is to find what practical steps we can take to tackle this rising trend.

I will not labour this point any further, other than to say that it is a challenge that all states and territories are grappling with. Certainly, when I go to corrective services ministers meetings, it is a topic that comes up there and it is one that jurisdictions are certainly sharing ideas on as well.

In that regard I do appreciate the fact that Mr Wall has addressed this topic today because it is a reminder for us all that we must continually strive to address this issue. I have included some information for Mr Wall and for the Assembly in the amendment that I have moved on some of the other points that he has raised. It is a matter of public record that a detainee recently escaped from corrections custody while at the Canberra Hospital receiving medical treatment. In my time there has been only one escape from custody, and that occurred not at the AMC but at the Canberra Hospital.

This was, of course, a concerning breach of security and it is being treated as such by corrections. I can assure the Assembly that corrections management are undertaking a range of actions in response to the escape and will change policy and procedures where required to minimise any chance of this happening again. But it is important to put it in perspective, and I have done that in my amendment. It notes that the ACT escape from secure custody rates for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 were in fact zero. The 2015-16 year-to-date figure is as a result of that one incident that has arisen in the last few weeks. That number may change, of course, but I certainly do not anticipate any further incidents.

I hope that Mr Wall will reflect on those figures that have been provided and that he will not take any guidance from his former leader, Mr Seselja, who once referred to an aborted escape attempt; and the facts of this case are important to reflect on. Two detainees smashed a window at the AMC and were able to escape from their cell. They then jumped over a low internal fence inside the AMC, but they never escaped the perimeter of the AMC. In fact, they never got close. Ultimately, they contacted corrections staff and asked to be let back in to the jail because it was in the middle of winter, it was extremely cold and they wanted to go back inside the accommodation.

There is an amusing side to that story, but the point is that they never got very far, yet Mr Seselja described the AMC as the “most unsecure jail in the country” off the back of that incident. They never made it into the community. They never got very far at all. So let us not see that sort of exaggeration in this debate, because there simply was not an escape from custody on that occasion.

In relation to Mr Wall’s comments about other security breaches, real or imagined, I have, in response to a similar motion previously, stepped the Assembly through each of our risk management strategies, and I do not intend to repeat them again today. I am happy to take specific questions and to organise a briefing for members if they wish to go over particular points, but I have gone through in some detail on previous occasions a range of security measures that are in place at the AMC and the fact that they are constantly evolving to address issues that arise.

In terms of the issues that Mr Wall raised about cost, the amendment I have moved provides useful detail about the actual cost of running corrections services in the ACT, and I believe it provides a more accurate and less hysterical picture than the one that has been suggested by Mr Wall in his motion. Mr Wall's motion references a cost per day from the 2016 ROGS report, which reported on the 2014-15 financial year. It is a figure that allows him to seek to illustrate his apparent concerns about the cost of running the AMC. My amendment references figures from the last few years to show the decrease we have seen in the daily cost of running the centre. These are all ROGS figures but they measure different costs.

My figures are in regard to real net operating expenditure per prisoner per day. Mr Wall uses a figure which measures total net operating expenditure and capital costs per prisoner per day. As the name implies, this includes capital costs, and these, of course, have recently been temporarily inflated in light of the expenditure on infrastructure we have been making since 2014-15. And I make no bones about that. Every member of this place knows that the government has made a significant investment in increasing capacity, and that necessarily flows through to the figures that Mr Wall has cited—the total net operating expenditure and capital costs per prisoner per day.

The real net figures—real net operating expenditure per prisoner per day—are a more reliable measure of ongoing costs in terms of the actual running of the facility. The key message is that these have been going down consistently, and that is outlined in my amendment. Mr Wall will perhaps have a different interpretation of those figures, but in referencing the operating costs of the AMC—and that goes to staffing, what we spend on prisoners and all of those sorts of things—let us focus on ensuring that we are comparing apples with apples. If we want to have a discussion about the merits of the capital investment, let us have that discussion, but let us not conflate two quite different measures.

Whilst it was not in his motion, Mr Wall referenced the issue of the changes to the visiting arrangements at the AMC. I will take some time to reflect on that, because there has been a change. It has come about in response to the opening of new accommodation units at the AMC and the rise in detainee numbers. From 1 May—the beginning of this week—there is a new visit schedule in place which is designed to ensure more fair and equitable access to visit opportunities for all detainees.

Under the new visit schedule every detainee has at least two visit opportunities each week of up to an hour each visit. Unfortunately, the situation we have had is that some detainees have had no visit access whatsoever. There have been people who have not been able to get a spot in the schedule. I cannot stand by and allow that situation to continue. Mr Wall cited an example of a family who until now have visited their family member for up to nine hours a week, and I commend that family for such a strong level of engagement. But the situation has been that some detainees got no access. That is not fair. That cannot be allowed to continue.

I will be very clear: despite inaccurate views cited by the former Chief Minister, Mr Stanhope, in the *Canberra Times*, the AMC continues to have the most generous

visiting regime of any prison in Australia. We operate visits from 8.30 am to 6.30 pm five days a week. Mr Stanhope in the paper cited Cooma and Goulburn jails. They operate visits on two days a week. So what the AMC offers is weekday visits, weekend visits, 8.30 am to 6.30 pm.

There is a limit. We only have one visitors room. We have to be very mindful of certain things. For example, when families come to visit, we have convicted sex offenders in the jail and we cannot have them in the visit centre. We have to be very careful of having them in the visit centre when families turn up with children. These are awful issues to talk about but this is the reality. We are seeking to minimise that kind of contact by having a new visits regime, so that we get the appropriate separation. There are families in this town who know each other and bear grudges. We cannot have them mixing in the visit centre. That is why a more detailed regime has been put in place.

Also, with the new accommodation units, our prisoners are better separated. It means that our staff can move people around more effectively so that the full visit time is utilised whereas, previously, there have been issues with transfers and visit times have been eaten into. These are the sorts of considerations that have gone into this visit regime. We will continue to monitor it and I will continue to receive feedback, but I want to emphasise that this is about trying to get a more fair and equitable distribution.

I believe the amendment I have moved offers a range of information that Mr Wall was seeking and hopefully members will find it useful and accurate.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (5.25): In closing, it is disappointing that the minister keeps trying to hide from the fact that there are substantial issues out there and continually denies the calls by the Canberra Liberals to have a full, overarching review of security, admin and procedures out there. Until there is a change of government, hopefully in October, nothing will change under the reign of this minister.

As far as Mr Rattenbury's amendment goes, I am happy that he continues to note, as we did, the increasing rate of Indigenous incarceration rates. I share Mr Rattenbury's dismay that corrections is at the back end of this issue and that the problem stems from the engagement with police and the courts system first of all. I thought Mr Corbell, as the Attorney-General and also as the minister responsible for ACT Policing, may have contributed something on this issue today. Seemingly, he is happy to leave it to the Greens to deal with the issue. At the back end, once they have been dealt with by the police and the courts, a solution on Indigenous incarceration rates will not be solved at the jail. It needs to be solved at the front end of law enforcement in the territory.

I will touch briefly on the operating costs of the AMC. Mr Rattenbury in his amendment chose to put in the real net operating expenditure, and cited the figures he mentioned in his speech. Those figures are a per prisoner, per day cost. Over those five years it is good to see that those figures have reduced somewhat, because the number of prisoners in the jail has increased substantially. The overall running costs of that place are getting extremely expensive. The operating cost has reduced from

\$355.37 five years ago to \$296 in the last reporting period—and you would hope so, as the numbers have increased, at a rough guess, by in excess of 100, if not more. I do not have the accurate figures in front of me at the moment. We have had substantial capital works out there and the jail continues to be nearing that capacity threshold. Of course, with that, the more people you cram in there, the less it costs to run each day. That does not necessarily illustrate improvement in management or improvement in efficiency regarding the way the facility is being run.

We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the inquiry that the minister has initiated into Indigenous incarceration rates and what is going to be done to try to address this issue. Minister Rattenbury, Minister Corbell and other ministers are responsible, and these decisions are being made and these policies are being implemented by their hand. The opposition can highlight what we see as faults, flaws and failings, but the real activity is done by those in government and those in the ministry and in cabinet. August will be right at the death knell of this parliament, but I am sure that corrections management will continue to be a big issue as we move forward.

The escape rate statistic is 0.26 for the 2015-16 year to date, after 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 having an escape rate of zero. Zero is what the community expects. Zero is the benchmark. Anything higher than that is a failure of procedure and a failure of policy. There has been a failure in the system somewhere if that escape rate is anything above zero.

Mr Rattenbury dwelled on Mr Seselja's comments in the past about prisoners who broke out of their accommodation at the AMC but asked to be let back in. It is an alarming thought in the first instance that they are able to leave an area where they are supposed to be incarcerated, regardless of whether they sought to leave the prison grounds or not. There was a story in my time in this Assembly of a prisoner who broke out of his cottage accommodation to go and retrieve drugs. That did not count as an escape attempt because he had every intention of going back, and did so, but he was getting out of a secure area after hours to go and retrieve contraband to help facilitate further crimes whilst in jail. It is just mind boggling on so many levels that that does not constitute a serious failing.

It seems that so long as there is a perimeter fence around the AMC, Mr Rattenbury will not be happy. It is the "softly, softly, treat them gently" approach. Actually, they are probably just messed up, poor people that have had some poor decisions made for them. I understand there are often very complex individuals who enter our corrections system, but they have been sent there by the courts, by the judiciary, for a breach of law. With that comes a punishment and also an opportunity for rehabilitation. Unless it is treated as such, we will continue to see the same failings year on year that have plagued this prison since it opened. I commend my original motion to the Assembly.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Affordable housing

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.31): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) recent research from a consortium comprising ACT Shelter, the ACT Council of Social Service, the Youth Coalition and Women's Centre for Health Matters found 13 per cent of all ACT households faced housing stress, which equates to about 19,600 households in the ACT;
- (b) about 6600 households in the lowest 40 per cent of combined household income found their rent or mortgage payments quite or very difficult to pay in the past three months;
- (c) among those individuals and households reporting housing stress in Canberra, single parent families are amongst those who are particularly overrepresented;
- (d) in the last 12 months in Canberra, of households in the bottom 40 per cent of household income, 7000 households made compromises on food and household groceries;
- (e) the research found "a significant intersection" between gender inequality and housing inequality;
- (f) St Vincent de Paul's recent report, *The Ache for Home*, states Australia has a crisis in the supply of social and affordable housing, as evidenced by "the hundreds of thousands who are experiencing homelessness, on wait-lists for public housing or living in severe housing stress. Taken together, the statistics tell us that across Australia there are over 105 000 people experiencing homelessness and 875 000 households experiencing housing stress";
- (g) Anglicare Australia's 2016 Rental Affordability Snapshot was released on 21 April 2016 and notes that "the private rental market in Canberra ... is extremely unaffordable for people on a low income, such as minimum wage or government benefits";
- (h) of the 1497 affordable and appropriate properties in the ACT and Queanbeyan surveyed by Anglicare Australia, there were no properties available for a single parent on Newstart Allowance with one child aged over 8;
- (i) the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute's *Supply shortages and affordability outcomes in the private rental sector: short and longer term trends* report released in June 2015 shows that of Q1 private renter households (households with incomes of \$30 000 a year or less, which would include all single people and single parents with one child, solely reliant on pensions and benefits), 63 per cent of Canberrans were paying severely unaffordable rent. This is in comparison to 31 per cent for the

same category of people living in Melbourne and is the second highest percentage after Inner Sydney;

- (j) housing stress has a range of detrimental impacts on a person, including financial pressures, as well as impacts on mental health and wellbeing;
- (k) the affordability of housing in Canberra is directly related to the rate, timeliness and manner of release of development-ready land; and
- (l) the affordability of housing in Canberra is also related to the high cost of Government fees and charges; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) fully implement measures in the Affordable Housing Action Plan to provide the capacity for houses in the “affordable” range;
- (b) provide new affordable housing sector supply through private financing;
- (c) acknowledge that increasing supply is the only sustainable solution to the provision of market supplied affordable housing for purchase and rental markets. Increasing the housing supply/stock will ensure that supply can meet or exceed demand, therefore moderating price increases, leading to more affordable housing;
- (d) guarantee loans to the Community Housing Provider (CHP) sector;
- (e) remove barriers that prevent CHPs from recycling their assets;
- (f) raise or guarantee affordable housing bonds;
- (g) include the active responsibility and administration for responding to homelessness in the role of housing ministers and their departments, including renaming the position to Minister for Housing and Homelessness, with clearly defined strategic responsibility for ensuring that sufficient housing is available for people experiencing exclusion;
- (h) amend the ACT Human Rights legislation to recognise the right to housing;
- (i) amend ACT anti-discrimination legislation to protect those in housing deprivation;
- (j) independently benchmark land development costs every two years;
- (k) repeal the lease variation charge in the city and town centres;
- (l) establish shovel ready inventory of land for development ahead of demand, based on population projections;
- (m) provide information to the Assembly detailing median house prices over the past 10 years, including a breakdown of what percentage is attributable to, the cost of land, the cost of Government fees and charges,

the cost of construction and any other costs for new and existing properties; and

- (n) report back to the Assembly on all these matters by the last sitting day in June 2016.

I am pleased to bring this motion about housing affordability to the attention of the Assembly today because housing affordability is such an important issue for all Canberrans. Affordable housing is usually defined as housing for the second quintile of income earners, those who do not qualify for social or public housing but who struggle to afford market rental housing without being placed in housing stress.

There has been an abundance of recent research on housing affordability in both the federal and the local spheres. For example, a recent St Vincent de Paul report called *The ache for home* states:

Australia has a crisis in the supply of social and affordable housing. This is evidenced by the hundreds of thousands who are experiencing homelessness, on wait-lists for public housing, or living in severe housing stress. Taken together, the statistics tell us that across Australia there are over 105,000 people experiencing homelessness and 875,000 households experiencing housing stress.

Other recent research from a consortium comprising ACT Shelter, the ACT Council of Social Service, the Youth Coalition and the Women's Centre for Health Matters found that 13 per cent of all ACT households faced housing stress, which equates to about 19,600 households in the ACT. So nearly 20,000 households in the ACT are facing housing stress.

The research found that about 6,600 households in the lowest 40 per cent of combined household income had found their rent or mortgage payments quite or very difficult to pay in the past three months. The research found that among those individuals and households reporting housing stress in Canberra, single-parent families were amongst those who were particularly over-represented. The research found that in the past 12 months in Canberra, of households in the bottom 40 per cent of household income, 7,000 households made compromises on food and household groceries. I will repeat that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it is a very alarming statement: in that research, in the past 12 months in Canberra, of households in the bottom 40 per cent of household income, 7,000 households made compromises on food and household groceries. This is alarming, Madam Deputy Speaker, and clearly shows that the ACT is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis.

Anglicare Australia's 2016 *Rental affordability snapshot* was released on 21 April 2016. It notes that the private rental market in Canberra is extremely unaffordable for people on a low income, such as the minimum wage or government benefits. Anglicare Australia's snapshot showed that of the 1,497 affordable and appropriate properties in the ACT and Queanbeyan surveyed by Anglicare Australia, there were no properties available for a single parent on Newstart allowance with one child aged over eight.

The AHURI *Supply shortages and affordability outcomes in the private rental sector: short and longer term trends* report released in June 2015 shows that of the first quintile private renter households—households with incomes of \$30,000 a year or less, which would include all single people and single parents with one child who were solely reliant on pensions and benefits—63 per cent of Canberrans were paying severely unaffordable rent. This is in comparison to 31 per cent for the same category of people living in Melbourne and is the second highest percentage after inner Sydney. We often hear about the unaffordability of Melbourne and Sydney, but Canberra—Canberra—is right up there with them. It is deeply concerning.

The affordability of housing in Canberra is directly related to the rate, timeliness and manner of release of development-ready land by the ACT government. For example, in December 2015 land was sold in the new suburb of Moncrieff. The demand for this land was very high. Reportedly every block was sold within three minutes of the sale opening—with three minutes for the blocks to sell out. That is just one example of high demand for development-ready land in the ACT.

In a *Canberra Times* article published on 26 May 2015, Khalid Ahmed, deputy under treasurer in the ACT from 2001 until 2013, was reported as saying:

... the government could solve the crisis in housing affordability as simply as releasing a steady supply of land, but is not even meeting its own targets.

Let me give another quote from Khalid Ahmed:

Affordability shouldn't be as big a problem as it is in Canberra because we have absolute control over the land supply ... If you have got the policy settings right, the rest will take care of itself. If you supply enough the prices will stabilise.

That is right: affordability should not be as big a problem as it is in Canberra because the government has absolute control over the most important policy levers. The government, their policy, is contributing towards the unaffordability of land in the ACT. That is not me saying this. This was someone who was a former under treasurer of the ACT for 12 years.

In March 2016 the Urban Development Institute of Australia released their *Submission on Innovative Funding Models for Affordable Housing in response to the issues paper released by the Affordable Housing Working Group of the Council on Federal Financial Relations*. In their submission, the UDIA noted:

One of the major difficulties Community Housing Providers ... face is in obtaining finance to purchase land upon which to build affordable housing. In purchasing land, they are frequently in competition for “good” sites (those with high access to services, jobs and transport) with fully commercial operators.

The ACT government could, for example, guarantee loans to the community housing provider sector. The submission went on:

This would have the effect of making money cheaper for CHPs and increase their ability to leverage their holdings into more affordable housing.

Again, what are the government doing in this regard? They are the monopoly owner of the land for sale in the ACT. They control and operate the land planning and regulatory regime for the use and disposal of land in the ACT. The affordability of housing in Canberra is directly related to the high cost of government fees and charges which we all know are going up over and over again. Under the current ACT Labor-Greens government, everyday Canberrans are paying these higher fees, these higher charges, these higher rates. It is what people speak to me about all the time. These higher fees, higher charges and higher rates will increase even more for everyday Canberrans as a result of the government's light rail.

Housing affordability has a range of wide-reaching impacts. It is linked to housing stress. Housing stress is described as follows:

... a situation where the cost of housing (either as rental, or as a mortgage) is high relative to household income. It may also be used to describe inadequate housing for a proportion of the population.

Housing stress has a range of detrimental impacts on a person, including financial pressures and impacts on mental health and wellbeing. Sometimes we talk about the social determinants of health, and housing is one of those social determinants of health. Housing stress and housing crisis have an impact on people's health and wellbeing.

What is the government doing? What is the ACT government doing to help members of our community who are facing housing stress? They are pushing up prices, because that is what they want: more money from the sale of their land. The ACT government had their own affordable housing action plan, released in 2007, which they appear to have put on the shelf and ignored pretty much since then. The aim of the affordable housing action plan was:

... to support the supply of affordable housing and to ensure that all individuals, irrespective of circumstances, are able to access accommodation suitable to their needs.

As a general rule, housing is considered and defined as affordable if it costs less than 30 per cent of gross household income. If you are paying 50 per cent or more of your gross household income in housing costs, either rent or mortgage, you are considered to be in housing crisis, and that means you are at risk of homelessness. The impacts go on and on, and the health and wellbeing impacts go on and on.

I am sure I do not need to remind those opposite—although I am going to remind you nevertheless—that in a *CityNews* article published on 17 June last year former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope nominated his greatest frustration or regret while Chief Minister as the lack of action on housing affordability, land planning and supply. That was his single greatest regret as Chief Minister.

My motion today is calling on the government to actually put some steps in place to fully implement the measures of the affordable housing action plan, to provide the

capacity for houses in the affordable range and provide new affordable housing supply through private financing and other measures.

The government seem to have struggled so much in this regard over the past few years that I provided them with a bit of a pick list of things that they could choose from to help with the affordable housing supply. They have been in government for 15 years now and they cannot get it right. I am happy to provide some assistance to them, some suggestions, because this is important to all Canberrans. It is important not just to you and me here; it is important to our children and our grandchildren that they can have affordable housing.

The ACT government is responsible for responding to our affordable housing crisis as well as to the homelessness that we see in our community. Without a greater supply of affordable housing properties, we will never be able to solve housing or homelessness. You need to have a safe, secure place for someone to rest their head and then help them address the issues that have contributed to or maintained their homelessness.

We call this the “housing first” model. The government often talks about this approach with the Common Ground approach in Gungahlin. Giving people somewhere safe and secure to call their own first and then providing them with the support that they need are what we need to address homelessness in the ACT—not churning people through the homelessness services, the fabulous homelessness services, that we have. We have a lack of exits from homelessness into housing for people because of the demand that we have and the lack of supply in our public housing sector.

There are things that we can be doing right now to start addressing our affordable housing crisis. We just need a government that will sit up and listen and take some action on this important issue.

The ACTCOSS and Shelter consortium released what is called *Stories of home* recently, a range of stories from people around Canberra outlining their issues with affordable housing in the ACT, how they may have ended up homeless in some instances or the struggles that they have had to find somewhere. Importantly, and usefully, the report breaks the lack of affordable housing up by electorate. It is salutary reading if you have not already looked at this particular report.

One of the stories I would like to point out to you is the story of Penny, who was driven by her own experience of housing affordability to become an advocate on housing issues. As a person with disability and an older woman, she tells a powerful story which highlights housing as a finite resource. I will not go into her full story; you can read that in the booklet. But basically what Penny said was this:

The housing situation here is at crisis point. I couldn't afford private rent and real estate agents are unwilling to rent to someone on a pension.

Penny's story is not unique. It is illustrative of a broader problem. It is illustrative of what is being talked about as an upcoming tsunami of older women experiencing homelessness.

We need to do more on the affordable housing front to make sure that we do not put people in that situation, at risk of homeless or actually tipping over the edge into homelessness. I call on the government to support my motion today and implement a wide range of measures that I have offered to them as examples of what they could be doing—no, what they should be doing—to improve housing affordability here in the ACT. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR HINDER (Ginninderra) (5.46): I move:

Omit all words after “notes”, substitute:

- “(a) the extensive range of research and report literature the ACT Government is considering in shaping its ongoing responses to housing affordability and homelessness issues, including:
 - (i) the reports of the Housing and Homelessness Policy Consortium;
 - (ii) the Productivity Commission’s Report on Government Services;
 - (iii) reports and workshops of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute;
 - (iv) St Vincent de Paul’s *The Ache For Home* report;
 - (v) Anglicare’s 2016 Rental Affordability Snapshot;
 - (vi) local property market data and trends; and
 - (vii) reports from local housing and homelessness services;
 - (b) the importance of considering these sources in total and not selectively using point-in-time data;
 - (c) that, on numerous indicators, the ACT rates as the best or among the best in its performance on housing affordability and provision of housing support and homelessness services;
 - (d) the active role played by the ACT Government under the Affordable Housing Action Plan in improving housing affordability for all Canberrans through measures such as phasing out stamp duty and accelerating land supply; and
 - (e) that housing affordability is influenced by a range of factors and policies at both the Territory and national levels;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) the ACT Government has led calls among State and Territory governments for the Australian Government to lead co-ordinated national action to improve housing affordability across Australia;

- (b) the Minister for Housing, Community Services and Social Inclusion tabled the ACT Government's submission to the Commonwealth Affordable Housing Working Group in the Assembly on 3 May 2016;
 - (c) State and Territory housing and homelessness ministers issued a unanimous call to the Commonwealth for greater funding certainty for housing and homelessness services at their meeting held on 31 March 2016; and
 - (d) the 2016 Commonwealth Budget released last night indicates that the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness will cease in June 2017, removing funding for frontline homelessness services; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) progress work through ministers and senior officials to:
 - (i) provide whole-of-government oversight and advice for the Government's actions in housing affordability; and
 - (ii) consider the Affordable Housing Action Plan and any options for improving housing outcomes for target groups such as private renters in the second income quintile; and
 - (b) report back to the Assembly on any formal response received from the Commonwealth to the ACT's submission to the Affordable Housing Working Group."

The ACT government welcomes the focus on housing affordability. We on this side of the house have been saying for some time that it is an issue for both territory and national levels of government. We need a coordinated policy in place. We also need a national framework which is sensitive to the different property markets and pressures, including the higher cost housing markets of most capital cities. The ACT government has engaged with the commonwealth in good faith on all of these issues. We made a submission to their working groups and have since engaged through our officials seeking to be part of positive national change in affordable housing policy.

All state and territory housing ministers are keen to be part of this process. As my amendment states, should this process move forward in the next few months, the government will be very happy to update the Assembly. However, last night's federal budget gives us little confidence. If anything, it seems to be taking Australia backwards on the issue of housing affordability.

The federal Treasurer made a virtue of refusing to give consideration to a change in negative gearing or capital gains tax policy, as Labor has said it will do, to level the playing field for families trying to buy a home to live in and to focus the housing market on greater supply. Combined with this is the Fairfax analysis of the impact of changes to the tax treatment of superannuation. I quote from the *Canberra Times*:

... two of the country's leading actuaries, Rice Warner chief executive Michael Rice and Mercer senior actuarial partner David Knox, warned that any

crackdown on super tax concessions for the rich without any changes to the negative gearing rules could have the unintended consequence of pushing more money into property.

I and this side of the house hope this effect, if it happens, will be modest, but it does make it clear that the assertions in Ms Lawder's motion—that is, that a change to land supply in the ACT is the sole factor in improving housing affordability—are wrong. What the article did was highlight yet another part of the federal budget that did nothing for the hopes and aspirations of younger Australians and those who dream of owning their own home, like their parents.

I also suggest that the multiple sources this motion points to all make it blatantly clear that housing affordability rests on a need for good legislation and policy at all levels of government. I do note, however, that many of the organisations it mentions have endorsed the federal tax changes proposed by Labor. The pressures I see among people here in our community are the reasons I support changes proposed by the Shorten opposition also. It is no secret that low income earners struggle in more expensive housing and rental markets such as ours, which is why the ACT government has been active on housing affordability for many years.

The government's affordable housing action plan addresses all aspects of affordable housing, including planning reform, land release, public and community housing, aged persons housing, and homelessness. Elements of this strategy are being adopted by other jurisdictions and, as I have said, we are keen to share our knowledge on the national level.

Nine years into our plan, the government has succeeded in its goal of supporting housing affordability for all Canberrans and, given the relative wealth of our community, our housing market is far more affordable than that of other capital cities. Despite this, the government acknowledges the ongoing challenges and has demonstrated a clear commitment to those in the greatest need.

In particular, this includes those households among the bottom 40 per cent of income earners who pay more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. Initiatives already in place or being developed for households in this category include the provision of a loan facility to Community Housing Canberra for the delivery of affordable rental properties and affordable homes to purchase; under this scheme the construction of 401 affordable rental homes for singles and families earning between \$30,200 and \$53,000 will become available; the availability of shared equity schemes for tenants in public housing to enable them to buy their home; the introduction of a home share program offering accommodation for low income singles and support for older persons to remain in their homes; conveyancing duty and land payment deferral for first homebuyers.

Across the entire Canberra housing market the government has placed emphasis on supply side measures which include the land release, the land supply pipeline and planning and building regulation. Against this commitment the government has released more than 33,000 residential dwelling sites since 2006-07. We have also

committed to the release of another 17,000 dwelling sites over the next four years, with 20 per cent of blocks across new estates reserved for affordable housing. We have also entered into more than 1,800 land rent contracts which have substantially lowered the barriers to home ownership for those who would not be able to contemplate home ownership in other jurisdictions.

Looking further ahead, and as the submission tabled yesterday explains, the government has formed a high level housing policy steering committee with responsibility for oversight and advice to government across our affordable housing initiatives. The committee is looking closely at the fit of the affordable housing action plan in the current market and will also look at options for a greater targeting of assistance for target groups such as private renters in the second income quintile.

Social housing is also an important component of a city's housing affordability and successive Labor governments have maintained the most significant social housing system per capita in Australia. Currently the government is renewing 11 per cent of these homes with more modern, efficient and accessible homes under the public housing renewal program. Tenants from these properties are being relocated progressively. Extensive consultation is being undertaken with the tenants to provide them with the support they need during this process. The ACT government supports a socially inclusive approach to public housing and is committed to working with local communities to ensure the design of new public housing is appropriate to their location and needs.

This is a record we on this side are proud to take forward and we look forward to having the debate around housing affordability, social housing and how we keep building fairness and inclusion into our communities as the year progresses. I commend the amendment circulated in my name to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.54): I would like to thank Mr Hinder for his comments and make a couple of points in response. Many of the suggestions that I made in my motion have been removed in the amendment, which is a pity because some of them did come directly from the affordable housing action plan which the government put together itself. That included the independent benchmark pipeline, an inventory of off the shelf land, those kinds of things.

It is such a pity that this government are more concerned about congratulating themselves about what they are doing rather than acknowledging the affordable housing crisis that we see every day in our city. And this is affecting young families and people on single incomes and families on single incomes more than any others. It is really disappointing that this government is not able to admit that more needs to be done in this regard. I will read a quote here:

Housing is a large part of Canberra's wealth and living standards. Its value underpins consumer confidence. Its prosperity adds substantially to economic growth. The provision of secure, affordable and appropriate housing is central to community wellbeing. The recent huge increases in housing prices have created severe problems for the territory's economic development and competitiveness, efficient urban development and intergenerational equity.

The major factor contributing to the decline of housing affordability in Canberra has been the increase in land prices ... the share of land cost in new house prices has increased significantly. I believe the solutions to these problems must come from the supply side ... Of course housing affordability is not just about the cost of buying a house; the cost of renting in this city also continues to increase. It is becoming more expensive to live in this city ... I believe the supply of low-rent housing in Canberra would benefit greatly from targeted incentives to attract large financial investors and by expanding the use of not-for-profit housing providers.”

That is a quote from 10 years ago. In fact, it is a quote from the now Chief Minister Andrew Barr’s inaugural speech on 2 May 2006, just about exactly 10 years ago, when the now Chief Minister had some interesting things to say about housing and housing affordability:

The major factor contributing to the decline in housing affordability in Canberra has been the increase in land prices.

It is as true today, if not more so, as it was 10 years ago. The Chief Minister, as a newly elected MLA, pointed this out and in the ensuing 10 years what has improved? I will tell you what has improved. Nothing. Nothing has improved. In fact, I think it is getting worse.

There are families out there who are struggling and this government is doing nothing to help them. The government is increasing their cost of living and putting them under more pressure, more stress. Housing is one of the largest parts of the way they have to use their income but on top of that they have food. I already spoke about the fact that many households had to make compromises on food. They have transport costs. They have utilities costs. They have schooling costs, all sorts of things. And they are having to make compromises in this regard because this government, this ACT Labor-Greens government, is continuing to profiteer from the sale of land. It is continuing to gouge ordinary ACT residents on the price of land.

Mr Smyth: Shame!

MS LAWDER: Shame indeed! It is an appalling abuse of their power and I am at a loss for words as to what else to say to a government that is unable to say, “Yes, there are other things we could be doing and we should be doing and we will be doing.” Instead they congratulate themselves, they pat themselves on the back. What else do they do? They blame the federal government. Over and over again we hear that in this place. “It is all the federal government’s fault. It is all the federal government’s fault.” I think that is a real copout.

I know that the national partnership agreement on homelessness was introduced as a one-off injection of funds and it was done by Kevin Rudd. It was meant to be a one-off injection of funds to kickstart solving homelessness which would then continue on under the funding under the national affordable housing agreement. It has been

extended time after time after time. That is a good thing but that is what happens when you give a one-off injection of funds. You become lazy and you start relying on it instead of taking responsibility for what you can be doing yourself.

The Auditor-General of the ACT found the issues that the ACT government had. They could not even account for their own spending of the national partnership agreement on homelessness. But they go cap in hand, “Money, money, money,” over and over again. And they could not even explain what they had done with the first lot of funding that they got.

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.

MS LAWDER: Here we have a government that has many of the policy levers at their fingertips and they are refusing to implement them. Instead, they are blaming the federal government because that suits their political narrative. It suits their political narrative rather than actually doing something to help the people of the ACT. I find it absolutely incredible that we are just going to keep gouging our residents over and over again—their rates, their fees, their charges. We are going to push up the price of land over and over again because what the government want is to rake in the most money that they possibly can instead of considering that intergenerational housing crisis that we are passing on to our children and grandchildren.

I do say, “Shame, shame on the government,” for their lack of action on the affordable housing action plan, their lack of action generally on housing affordability and their lack of willingness to embrace possible solutions to start to make some inroads into the problem of housing affordability in the ACT. We will not be supporting this amendment today.

Question put:

That **Mr Hinder’s** amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 6

Dr Bourke
Ms Burch
Mr Corbell
Ms Fitzharris

Mr Gentleman
Mr Hinder
Mr Rattenbury

Mr Coe
Mr Doszpot
Mrs Dunne
Ms Lawder

Mr Smyth
Mr Wall

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the Clerk, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members of the ACT's volunteer bush fire service who are here as part of the Speaker's Assembly outreach program. I welcome you to your Assembly.

Renewable energy

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (6.06): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) on 22 April 2016 representatives from more than 160 countries, including more than 60 heads of state, met at the United Nations' New York headquarters to sign the Paris Agreement on Climate Change;
- (b) urgent action is required by national and sub national governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a rapid rate if there is any hope of meeting the Paris Agreement's goal of keeping global warming below 2°C;
- (c) the ACT Government is continuing to take decisive action on climate change and provide leadership by committing to bring forward the target for net zero carbon emissions in the ACT to 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement, as well as increasing the renewable energy target to 100 percent by 2020; and
- (d) because of its commitment to renewable energy to date the ACT Government has attracted renewable energy businesses to the ACT, creating new training programs, research opportunities and jobs, and growing a more robust, diverse and vibrant ACT economy providing \$400 million in direct local industry development; and

(2) reaffirms:

- (a) its commitment to a 40 percent reduction in ACT's greenhouse gas emissions by 2020; and
- (b) the central role and importance of a 100 percent renewable energy target in achieving this reduction.

I also want to welcome the members of the volunteer bushfire service here to the Assembly. I hope you enjoy the function this evening. Madam Speaker, this motion recognises the broad representation of countries that mean to sign the Paris agreement on climate change and the need for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is why the ACT government reaffirms its commitment to a 40 per cent reduction

in ACT greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and the importance of a 100 per cent renewable energy target to reach that aim.

It is known that the territory's renewable energy target is moving from 90 per cent in 2020 to 100 per cent by 2020. We are also increasing the territory's level of ambition in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

In 2010 the Assembly passed the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act. The act established targets for reducing greenhouse gases in the territory, including a 40 per cent reduction on the 1990 levels by 2020. In October of 2012 the government released the ACT's climate change strategy and action plan 2, or AP2 for short. The AP2 established a pathway to meet this target by focusing on investments in renewable energy and by improving energy efficiencies across households and businesses.

The greenhouse gas inventory for Canberra in the 2012-13 financial year when AP2 was released estimated emissions from the territory were equivalent to just under 3,200 kilotons of carbon dioxide. Unlike conventional greenhouse gas accounting, the ACT greenhouse gas inventory included emissions from the generation of electricity that occurred outside the ACT.

These would normally be attributed to the jurisdiction where the emissions actually occur, such as scope 1 emissions. However, the ACT government has chosen to take responsibility for emissions associated with the territory's consumption of energy where the generation of this electricity occurred outside the territory borders. These emissions are included in the ACT as scope 2 emissions.

Emissions are also accounted for in respect of the gas and transport fuel sectors, industrial processes, agriculture, land use, land use change and forestry, and the waste sector. The most recent greenhouse gas inventory for 2014-15 released in October last year showed that electricity sectors account for nearly 60 per cent of the territory's total emissions annually.

Recognising that this is a high emitting and, therefore, high priority sector, in accordance with the interim emissions reduction target of 40 per cent below that of the 1990 levels by the year 2020, AP2 committed the government to a target of 90 per cent of the territory's consumption to be from renewable sources by 2020.

The successful large-scale renewable energy initiatives conducted by the ACT government have to date been a 40 megawatt large-scale solar farm auction in 2012-13 and two 200 megawatt large-scale wind auctions between 2014 and 2016. The 2012-13 solar auction resulted in a feed-in tariff entitlement being awarded for a 20 megawatt solar farm located in Royalla. This facility commenced generating renewable energy in 2014 and contributed 34,000 megawatt hours of renewable energy for the 2014-15 year.

Feed-in tariff entitlements were also awarded for a 13 megawatt solar farm located at Mugga Lane and for a seven megawatt solar farm that will be built at Williamsdale.

Together when they are complete they will generate around three per cent of the territory's forecast 2020 electricity demand.

The successful proponents of the first and second wind auctions included a 9.4 megawatt wind farm near Bendigo in Victoria; a 200 megawatt wind farm stages 1 and 2 near Port Augusta in South Australia; an 80.5 megawatt wind farm near Ararat in Victoria; and a 100 megawatt sapphire farm 1 in the northern areas of New South Wales.

In relative terms, this is the biggest step change in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by any Australian jurisdiction. By moving to a 100 per cent renewable energy target by 2020, the ACT's contracted renewable energy capacity will increase from 550 megawatts to around 650 megawatts.

In addition to providing clean energy for the territory, that of itself being a grand aim, the renewable energy proponents will be making a substantial contribution to the ACT's economy. Economic benefits that have occurred to the territory as a result of renewable energy auctions include \$12 million for the new renewable energy innovation fund; close to \$6 million for a new renewable energy skill centre of excellence at the CIT; more than \$30 million over a period of 20 years to support the development of micro grid technology research and commercialisation in the ACT; over \$1 million going towards renewable energy technology demonstration; and over \$1 million to support the development of trades training for the design, installation, maintenance and distribution of energy storage units.

We have also seen over \$6 million directed towards the development of new world-class applied research capacity in the ACT and over \$2 million to support the development of a CBR renewables precinct to attract renewable energy, energy storage and allied industries here to the territory.

The ACT government has recently committed \$600,000 from the renewable energy innovation fund to the next generation energy storage pilot. I understand that this will target the rollout of around 200 residential and light commercial energy-storing devices across the ACT by the end of this calendar year.

But decarbonising the territory's electricity supply is still only half the problem. As the ACT's population continues to rise, so will energy consumption, placing further pressure on both the 40 per cent greenhouse gas reduction targets and the 100 per cent renewable energy target. To tackle the increasing consumption, the ACT government has implemented the energy efficiency improvements scheme, which commenced in January of 2013. Since that time over 95 per cent of participants surveyed have indicated that they would recommend ACTEW's energy saving house calls to a friend. So our community has embraced these energy saving initiatives that this government has put in place.

Another program is the ACTSmart program. ACTSmart provides a range of sustainability programs to assist households, businesses, schools and the community. To date, 433 small business and community groups have received a tailored

assessment and report, with 209 claiming a rebate and many more currently undertaking energy efficiency upgrades.

ACTSmart's household program provides assistance in a variety of ways, including advice, rebates, workshops and online sustainability tools. To date, this program has reached over 3,300 households. The ACTSmart household low income program supports low income households, with practical assistance and advice to reduce energy and water bills for those in most need in our community, with more than 7,300 low income households benefiting from this program.

The government has shown that decarbonising the economy can be achieved and provide benefits for residents and businesses. Furthermore, a recent poll conducted by a respected Canberra-based think tank shows that three-quarters of Australians support state-based renewable energy targets in the absence of leadership at a national level.

In closing, whilst they have left the chamber, I note that the bushfire brigade members themselves who do a commendable job see first-hand the impact of not addressing the issues of climate change in the volunteer work that they do.

In conclusion, Madam Assistant Speaker, if global aspirations for carbon neutrality are going to be realised by mid-century as proposed by the Paris agreement, then governments at all levels and of all persuasions are going to need to take affirmative action in a way that this ACT Labor government has demonstrated and is doing. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

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

Adjournment

Motion by **Mr Gentleman** proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Portable long service leave

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (6.17): I rise to briefly speak on the portable long service leave amendments that were passed through this Assembly. We know long service leave is an important part of employment standards. We also know workforce mobility is high, with around three in four workers staying with their employer for less than ten years. This structural trend away from long-term employment is limiting access to long service leave for a large proportion of the workforce, particularly for women.

Portable long service leave was introduced to mitigate these inequalities by allowing workers to move between employers in specific industries without losing the credit time that they have worked in that industry. By recognising and encouraging loyalty within these industries, the schemes benefit employees but also the consumers, because the consumers get the benefit of a retained and skilled workforce.

As I look to members here, I think I am the only nurse in this place who has indeed worked in the aged-care sector. I have worked in nursing homes and retirement centres and have provided home visits to the elderly while they are still living in their own homes. I know firsthand what the work in the aged-care sector is. I have cared for, showered, dressed and fed many elderly people. I have worked alongside the fabulous workers in the aged-care sector. They are a committed, respectful workforce, and we should value and respect them. There should not have been any hesitation in awarding them portable long service leave.

It is because of this firsthand experience that I know how hard the work is, how committed these workers are and that they should be valued and recognised for the work they do. That is why I am pleased that those on this side of the chamber supported a long service leave program for the aged-care sector, a program that allows hard workers to access their fair entitlements. It is disappointing, though, that we continued to see the Canberra Liberals try and deny these hard workers access to their fair entitlements. It is disappointing that the Canberra Liberals continued to deny workers who stay in the same industry access to their fair entitlements.

Whilst disappointed, one ought not be surprised, because who can forget the Canberra Liberals position on long service leave, and it was repeated and reaffirmed here this week. Of course, let us not forget their position on the value of women in the workforce. Let us recall what Mrs Dunne has said in this place. On long service leave Mrs Dunne has said:

Long service leave was envisaged in Australia and New Zealand to allow people to return home on a boat. In a sense ... it is a real and intended purpose now redundant for many obvious reasons. Even from that viewpoint, it is dubious to think that workers remaining in an industry, let alone a single employer, should be able to accumulate long service leave.

Extraordinary statements from the Canberra Liberals. And on women, who are the predominant gender in the aged-care sector and who the Canberra Liberals tried this week to deny access to portable long service leave, Mrs Dunne said:

... often women have somewhat of a luxury about whether they are in the workforce or not ... And it is often the case, especially in a town like Canberra ... that women, especially in their middle years ... are more inclined to move in and out of the workforce as it suits them ...

I do not agree with that sentiment in any way, shape or form. I will quote the job description of an aged-care worker from an ad that was on the internet today:

... provide safe, effective quality care for our residents. It will include but not be limited to, assisting residents with showering, dressing, grooming, toileting, medication assistance, communication, eating, mobility and social activities in accordance with the resident's nursing care plan.

If I were to ask a woman working in the aged-care sector tomorrow morning—who had started possibly before 9 o'clock, who had to deal with her family, possibly drop

children off at child care and who earns less than \$45,000 a year—if she thought she was in a position of luxury and that she moved in and out of the workforce as it suited her, I would expect the answer may be no. If I were then to ask her would she want to access her due and fairly acquired long service leave entitlements, I would imagine that her answer would be yes. That is why this Labor government continues to support the workers. (*Time expired.*)

Child Development Service

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) (6.22): On Tuesday, 12 April I launched the new ACT Child Development Service at the Holder centre. The launch was attended by the Minister for Education, Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA, and was well attended by a range of cross-directorate representatives from education, health and community services. Also in attendance were other service providers in the sector, child development service staff and members of the reconciliation action plan committee who gifted an original artwork to the service, with the artist Tiffany Lawrence also attending.

The launch was an opportunity for all attendees to learn more about this new service and personally meet the staff involved. At the launch I was able to meet one of the parents using this service who reported that she felt the service gave her peace of mind about her son's development and she praised the staff for their assistance.

This new Child Development Service is a redesign of previous services provided by the ACT government and now provides a more integrated service for Canberrans. The community services, health and education directorates have collaborated to streamline assessment services for ACT families in the development of this new service. It supports ACT families who have concerns about their child's health and development. This might include identifying delays in speech and language, movement, hand skills, self-care and social development.

The Child Development Service will also assist children who may be eligible for the national disability insurance scheme and who require assistance to access the scheme. The Child Development Service provides assessment, referral, information and linkages for children from nought to six years and for children between seven and eight years with complex needs who have not had a previous assessment by allied health professionals. It also provides autism assessment for children up to 12 years.

The Child Development Service has an intake service and provides speech pathology and physiotherapy drop-in clinics at Holder and at the child and family centres in Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and west Belconnen. Through this early assessment and referral, children in the ACT will be getting the support they need to reach their full potential.

As well as referring to the NDIS, the Child Development Service assists families by referring and linking them into other services and programs that can support their

needs and priorities, for example, play groups, parenting programs, health services and housing.

Staff are delivering intake, referral, linkages and assessment services, which are often key steps in determining if children are eligible for the NDIS. Children eligible for the NDIS who need support will be provided with a funding package which will enable therapy services to be purchased from the non-government sector. In addition to speech pathologists, occupational therapists, social workers, physiotherapists, school psychologists and early childhood teachers, the service also works closely with the child and health medical officers and community paediatricians who are also located at the Holder centre.

Importantly, the Child Development Service has been developed in line with the human services blueprint principles. As a blueprint better service, it is child-centred, family-focused and aligns with one of the ACT government's priorities to provide an efficient and seamless human services system. It is a system where families only need to tell their story once because the collaborating professionals within the service share information. It ensures that services are better matched to individual needs so that families get the right service for them at the right time.

Tuggeranong Community Council

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo—Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, Minister for Transport and Municipal Services and Assistant Minister for Health) (6.25): I rise this afternoon to thank the Tuggeranong Community Council for having me at their meeting last night to speak about transport Canberra and a few other local issues with their members. Despite it being federal budget night, there was a great turnout of members and residents at the meeting, including you, Madam Assistant Speaker. It was great to meet the executive who are all obviously very passionate about Tuggeranong and very positive about the future of our southern-most town centre.

I would like to thank the president, Glenys Putulny, first vice president Wayne King, second vice president Beverley Flint, treasurer Max Flint, secretary Paul Nicholl and the other officers for their very kind and warm welcome. It was also great to meet other residents, including Annalyse Betts, a student at Lake Tuggeranong College, who is now chairing the Tuggeranong Community Council's first ever youth subcommittee. Annalyse is working with the TCC to come up with some ideas for young people in the region; so it was great to get a sense of some of the issues that are relevant to her and her peers as well.

At the meeting I had an opportunity to talk about transport Canberra and I officially launched our public transport survey, which is now online at transport.act.gov.au. My presentation looked at what our new transport agency, transport Canberra, will do from 1 July and how we are integrating our public transport system, giving people more choices and making public transport more efficient, reliable, convenient and affordable.

I was pleased to tell the meeting about some of the great innovations in the public transport space, like electric cars, car sharing, ride sharing and making active travel work for more people. I spoke also about the flexible bus service, which has transported people more than 20,000 times since it was launched last year, offering our older citizens more opportunities to get out and about in their communities. There was much interest in the potential of our flexible bus service. And I spoke about how we will integrate light rail with buses and other modes of transport, improve our road network and make our transport system more attractive, convenient and comfortable for people to use.

It was great to get a range of questions about how we can improve our bus system, where light rail will go next, what the stops will be like and how affordable light rail will be. I will be taking many of the suggestions made to me on board. We also spoke briefly about graffiti, which I know is a big issue across our city and considerably so in Tuggeranong.

ACT Policing representatives also spoke about this issue and the great work they are doing to try and stop it. It was great to talk also about our graffiti coordinator and to put local residents in touch with the graffiti coordinator.

I would like to extend my thanks again to the Tuggeranong Community Council for having me along. It was great to explain how the ACT government is improving transport across all of Canberra. I look forward to continuing to visit other community councils across the city.

Communities@Work

MR HINDER (Ginninderra) (6.28): I recently had the enjoyable opportunity to visit Communities@Work Ngunnawal Child Care and Education Centre to see firsthand the excellent work that Communities@Work does in north Canberra in both Dr Bourke's and my electorate and, in this instance, in Minister Fitzharris's electorate. The Ngunnawal centre is one of the best in Canberra and is a vital part of service delivery for families in the Gungahlin's region. It also serves the purpose of bringing the community together around education and support for young children and support for families.

The centre was assessed and rated as "exceeding" by child education and care assurance agencies for the year 2014-15. I note that this is the highest rating achievable by a childcare centre in the Gungahlin area and a commendable achievement by managers and staff of the centre.

Commitment to education offered by the centre is second to none, with all staff being fully qualified and accredited both as education leader and early childhood leader, ensuring quality outcomes for families and their children. Particularly important is the emphasis placed on having multicultural staff that are reflective of the diversity that makes up the Gungahlin unique community.

The staff at Ngunnawal childcare centre can speak over 10 languages between them, which ensures that children are placed in an environment that makes them feel comfortable. Having multicultural staff also serves the purpose of ensuring that young children are exposed to other cultures and backgrounds, an extremely important part of the socialisation process, especially in an area that is so diverse.

It means that the centre can meet the needs of families from all backgrounds and can provide culturally appropriate care for children. The centre is also conveniently located next to Ngunnawal Primary School. This allows parents to pick up and drop off their children in one go and saves valuable time. It means that older children can take their younger brothers and sisters to school, that public transport is easier to use and that a real sense of community forms in that area. In a society and economy that is increasingly making achieving the work-life balance difficult, that kind of convenience is important and essential for working families.

Madam Assistant Speaker, Communities@Work does particularly important work in our community. I applaud their commitment to quality and affordable early child care in the Gungahlin and Belconnen regions. My particular thanks go to Nishi Puri for organising my visit and to the staff members of Communities@Work Ngunnawal Child Care and Education Centre for contributing to our community and our children's future.

Celebrate Gungahlin festival

MR COE (Ginninderra) (6.31): I have spoken in this place previously about the Celebrate Gungahlin festival, and last month I, like numerous other people in the Assembly, had the pleasure of attending the second festival at the Gungahlin town park. The theme of the 2016 festival was "The little rocky hill—a place where cultures meet".

The festival was a wonderful opportunity for the Gungahlin community to join together and showcase everything that Gungahlin has to offer. Celebrate Gungahlin was very well attended by local families and a wide range of community groups, as well as by a number of representatives from this place, as I have just mentioned. The event was again opened by the Chief Minister. Indeed, with so many members of the Assembly present, it was a good indication of the esteem in which we all hold the growing district.

The enthusiasm of the organisers, community groups and attendees was inspiring. Thirty-five stalls were hosted at the festival, a figure which is 56 per cent up on the number from previous years.

I offer my congratulations and thanks to all those on the Celebrate Gungahlin committee who worked so hard to ensure the success of this year's event. The team from Communities@Work did a wonderful job, as well as the Gungahlin Community Council, Gungahlin College, JM Publishing, the Marketplace Gungahlin and My Gungahlin. They all deserve thanks. The organisers are undertaking a survey to ensure

that the festival continues to meet the needs of the community going into the future. I would encourage everyone involved to complete that survey.

The festival also benefited from its many sponsors and supporters, which included the Morgans Group, the ACT LDA, the Bendigo bank, McGrath Estate Agents, Yeend & Associates, Infinity Tours, the Coffee Club, the Marketplace, Icon Water and Senator Zed Seselja.

Celebrate Gungahlin is a fantastic family-oriented event which brings together the community. I hope it will continue for many years going into the future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.34 pm.