



Debates

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Tuesday, 9 August 2016

MADAM SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) took the chair at 10 am, made a formal recognition that the Assembly was meeting on the lands of the traditional custodians, and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

**Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee
Scrutiny report 47**

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 47, dated 8 August 2016, together with an erratum and the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR DOSZPOT: Scrutiny report 47 contains the committee’s comments on two bills, 121 pieces of subordinate legislation, four government responses and one executive member’s response. It also includes comment on proposed government amendments to two government bills. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting.

The erratum corrects an error on page 23 of the report regarding comment on the executive member’s response to the Freedom of Information Bill 2016. Line 2 should read, “This is not beyond its terms of reference.” I commend the report to the Assembly.

Members, this is the last scrutiny report on bills and subordinate legislation of this Eighth Assembly. It also marks the last scrutiny report for one of our legal advisers, Mr Peter Bayne, who is retiring after 19 years in the role. Many members in this chamber have served on the scrutiny committee in one of its various guises and all would be aware of Peter’s service and dedication.

In his time Peter has reviewed every bill that has been presented to the Assembly from the Third Assembly—from the momentous to the mundane. It is through his diligent work that many laws now in effect in the ACT have been improved between 1995 to this Eighth Assembly in 2016. On behalf of all members of the scrutiny committee, both past and present, I would like to thank Peter Bayne for his contribution to the ACT Legislative Assembly and wish him well in his retirement.

MADAM SPEAKER: I add my words of thanks for the work that has been done on behalf of the Assembly by Peter Bayne. As a former chair of the scrutiny committee, I value his work very much, and I wish him well.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change): I seek leave to make some comments on the report.

Leave granted.

MR CORBELL: I would like to join with you in acknowledging the work of Mr Bayne as the legal adviser to the scrutiny of bills committee. The scrutiny of bills committee performs a very important function in this place. It is a key element of the human rights protection mechanisms that are engaged in this place's deliberation of laws. I want to join with other members in acknowledging his very lengthy period of service and the important contribution he has made.

I would also like this morning to draw to the attention of members the quite extraordinary comments from the committee, the unanimous comments from the committee, in its report on the Freedom of Information Bill 2016, the executive member's bill from Mr Rattenbury. I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I do not think I have ever seen such extraordinary and strong comments from the scrutiny of bills committee on a bill.

It is clear that there is a very strong disagreement between the committee and Mr Rattenbury as to the function and operation of his law. Recognising Mr Bayne's own personal expertise in freedom of information law dating back over many decades and the fact that he has advised the committee in its response, and the committee has chosen to adopt it, I think it is prudent that members in this place reflect on the scrutiny of bills committee report in determining the question as to whether or not Mr Rattenbury's bill should be agreed to later this week.

Perhaps the most telling comment from the scrutiny of bills committee is in its final sentence. In response to Mr Rattenbury's comments on the scrutiny of bills committee report, the committee concludes:

The member's comments—

That is Mr Rattenbury's comments—

suggest that he has not grasped how his own bill might operate.

These are quite strong comments from what is normally a cautious and conservative committee. What is clear from the committee's comments is that Mr Rattenbury's bill presents a very real prospect of a more complex freedom of information regime that could lead to delay and more conservative decision-making on the part of the government and its agencies; that the length of time for decisions and appropriate review mechanisms will become more complex and lengthy; that the potential costs, including fees for applicants, could increase considerably; and that the requirement for decision notices will also lead to complexity.

In addition, it is very clear from the committee's comments that human rights, and particularly privacy considerations, and the interaction of this proposed law with the Human Rights Act, have not been properly taken into account by Mr Rattenbury. Regretfully, it would appear that in the interaction with the scrutiny of bills committee Mr Rattenbury has chosen to be provocative in his comments, has accused the committee of going beyond its terms of reference, and has accused the committee of not being familiar with the current operation of the Freedom of Information Act.

Given that Mr Bayne is a recognised academic expert in the operation of freedom of information, it is disappointing to see this interchange. I would simply draw to members' attention, Madam Speaker, that this is a very serious issue where the scrutiny of bills committee has determined that the proposer of a significant reform to the Freedom of Information Act does not appear to know how his own bill may operate and the impact it may have on the operation of freedom of information law in this territory.

MADAM SPEAKER: There are a couple of issues in relation to this that I will seek advice from the Clerk about, and I may make a statement later in the day.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 31

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.08): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 31—*Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 3 of 2015: Restoration of the Lower Cotter Catchment*, dated 26 July 2016, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I am pleased to speak to report No 31 of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Review of Auditor-General's report No 3 of 2015: restoration of the lower Cotter catchment*. The audit report presented the results of a performance audit that examined the management of the lower Cotter catchment. This involved consideration of the implementation of the lower Cotter catchment strategic management plan 2007, which was released in January 2007.

In accordance with the resolution of appointment of the committee, the audit report was referred to the committee for examination. The committee has established procedures for its examination of these reports pursuant to the Assembly resolution. In accordance with these procedures, the committee resolved on 10 November 2015 to inquire further into the audit report.

The objective of the audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of the management of the lower Cotter catchment by

ACT government agencies and Icon Water. The audit focused on ACT government agencies and Icon Water's implementation of the lower Cotter catchment strategic management plan 2007 and other recent activities in the management of the catchment.

The audit made 12 recommendations, of which three were considered to be high priority. In response to the Auditor-General's report, the government agreed to all 12 recommendations. The committee acknowledges that cooperation across government agencies and community volunteers in restoration of the catchment has resulted in the achievement or part achievement of almost all 29 management actions outlined in the 2007 lower Cotter catchment strategic management plan. Notwithstanding, the committee emphasises that further work remains.

The committee also acknowledges that since presentation of the audit report a number of significant aspects relating to management of the catchment have occurred. Firstly, as part of the 2015-16 budget, the government appropriated to the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate a total of \$7.8 million over four years to actively manage and protect the catchment. Secondly, the government announced the creation of a single conservation agency within the Environment and Planning Directorate, which became effective from 1 July this year.

In the report tabled today, the committee has made seven recommendations. I will make a few very brief comments this morning as they relate to the recommendations. Two recommendations are concerned with budget and functional matters, in particular the implementation of a sustainable funding model for management of the catchment and improved transparency as it relates to budgets for maintaining source water protection and land management in the catchment.

Two recommendations are concerned with seeking updates on the recommendations of the audit. Three recommendations are focused on current issues and risks to the catchment, specifically seeking an update on progress with regard to pine wildling removal trials within the Blue Range area; that the finalisation of a recreation strategy for the catchment be prioritised; and that government consider extending the program of native planting and habitat restoration for the catchment in partnership with the local community and community-based organisations and groups.

In summary, the overarching objective of catchment management is the protection of water resources. In the case of catchments that are sources of domestic water supply, the protection of water quality is of paramount importance. Every catchment has its own unique characteristics that generate respective risk profiles which should be used to identify, prioritise and underpin management strategies to achieve catchment objectives.

Of equal importance is a sustainable funding model for catchment management. The lower Cotter catchment has a unique history and specific characteristics that require careful and appropriate management to ensure protection of the catchment as a source of domestic water supply in the territory. The audit has been important in setting out a framework for the management of the catchment now and into the future.

In conclusion, the committee appreciated the opportunity as part of a technical briefing to meet and hear from a range of officers from the ACT Parks and Conservation Service with considerable expertise across the many facets of the catchment. The committee also wishes to thank the organisations and individuals that contributed to its inquiry by making submissions, providing additional information and/or appearing before it to give evidence. The committee is grateful that it was able to draw on a broad range of expertise and experience in its deliberations.

I would also like to thank my committee colleagues—Ms Burch, Mr Hinder and Mr Coe—the former chair Brendan Smyth, other former members of the committee under whom this inquiry commenced, and the secretariat to the committee. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 32

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.14): I present the following report:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 32—*Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2015: Bulk Water Alliance*, dated 26 July 2016, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I am pleased to speak to report No. 32 of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Review of the Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2015: Bulk Water Alliance*. The audit report presented the results of a performance audit that focused on:

... ACTEW's activities in participating in the Bulk Water Alliance for the delivery of the three major water infrastructure projects:

- the enlarged Cotter Dam;
- the Murrumbidgee to Googong Pipeline; and
- the Googong Dam Spillway.

In accordance with the resolution of appointment of the committee, the audit report was referred to it for examination. The committee has established procedures for its examination of these reports pursuant to the Assembly resolution. In accordance with these procedures, the committee resolved on 10 November 2015 to inquire further into this audit report. The objective of the audit was to provide:

... an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of ACTEW's management of its Bulk Water Alliance and the delivery of its associated infrastructure projects. This includes consideration of whether the governance and administrative arrangements of the Bulk Water Alliance have been appropriate and effective in assisting ACTEW to manage its financial and performance risks in the delivery of the Bulk Water Alliance projects.

As noted in the audit report:

The scope of the audit included consideration of ACTEW's activities to manage and establish the alliance contracting arrangement, to manage costs and its communication with key stakeholders ...

The audit did not include consideration of the appropriateness or otherwise of ACTEW, or ACT Government, decisions to proceed with the water infrastructure projects.

The concept of project alliancing underpins the bulk water alliance and that was the focus of the audit. Project alliancing differs from traditional procurement with regard to risk sharing and, in the main, uses a selection process for alliance partners focused on qualitative criteria with less of a focus on price as a key criterion.

A landmark study called "In pursuit of additional value—a benchmarking study into alliancing in the Australian Public Sector (2009)":

... confirmed that alliancing can provide real benefits in the delivery of public infrastructure and has a place in the suite of other established procurement methods that are available to governments. This is welcome where it can demonstrably deliver incremental public value over other alternatives and reduces the cost of industry engaging with governments.

That study also identified that the:

... adoption of alliancing by government raises some matters which must be carefully managed in the interest of delivering value to the taxpayer. Alliancing is a very sophisticated development in delivering major infrastructure and agencies must fully understand the opportunities and tradeoffs that may be required.

In considering the audit report and its findings, in its report the committee has made comment across five areas, specifically: development of the audit objective and scope, suitability of the alliance model, the bulk water alliance projects, communication matters, and lessons learned. And in its report the committee has made four recommendations, all of which are focused on lessons to be learned.

The committee emphasises that there is now a considerable body of research on the use of project alliancing in Australia that has distilled important benchmarks for its best practice. The committee considers that it would be remiss of any territory entity either currently using or considering alliance contracting arrangements not to heed this best practice.

In summary, the committee is of the view that the audit has been important for two major reasons. Firstly, the use of project alliancing by territory entities is not commonplace, that projects suitable for this form of procurement are of a long-term nature, and as a delivery methodology it is complex and technical. Accordingly, the audit documents a series of valuable lessons for any current and future alliance contracting arrangements that may be entered into by an entity on behalf of the

territory. It would be remiss of any territory entity not to heed these lessons. Secondly, the audit examined the appropriateness of ACTEW's, now Icon Water's, decision to use project alliancing to deliver the three projects profiled, including how the alliance was structured and managed.

The committee thanks all those who contributed to its inquiry by making a submission, providing additional information or appearing before it to give evidence. I would also like to thank my committee colleagues, Ms Burch, Mr Hinder and Mr Coe, the former chair Mr Smyth, and other former members of the committee under whom the inquiry commenced. I would also like to pass on our very sincere thanks to the secretariat of the committee for all of their hard work. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services— Standing Committee

Statement by chair and paper

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

In May this year 293 students, ranging from kindergarten to year 12, from 28 ACT schools came together at the parliament of youth on sustainability at the Australian National University. They assembled to address the question: what is one action we should take to reduce Canberra's ecological footprint? During the parliament's committee sessions, 66 proposals were discussed, leading to 16 proposals brought to a full parliamentary session. Students then voted for their six preferred proposals and elected student ministers to present them to the committee. Some members of the Assembly had the opportunity to attend the session. The project was coordinated by SEE-Change with support from the ACT government and sponsors.

On 15 June this year the committee met with 14 members of the student cabinet and their advisers and supporters to discuss the proposals. Each of the student ministers presented a summary of their proposal and answered questions from the committee. Following the formal presentation and question and answer session, the committee had the opportunity to continue informal discussions and share ideas with the students over afternoon tea. The proposals presented included installing sensor taps in ACT public places, vending machine rubbish bins, wind turbine installation, sensor-activated streetlights, a bike share scheme and a ban or levy on boutique bags.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the student ministers for sharing their ideas with us with such passion. I was impressed by the enthusiasm and the thought displayed by those students and their enthusiasm to make sure that the community that they inherit and that they have carriage of is one that has a high regard for the ethological footprint. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity for

the committee to hear the views and the ideas of the ACT's young people about the future that we are building and the city in which we live. I present the following paper:

Parliament of Youth on Sustainability—White Paper, dated June 2016.

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

MS BURCH (Brindabella): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services relating to petition No 3-16. The petition was received by the Assembly on 9 June and referred to the committee under standing order 99A. The petition concerned the development on the Red Hill public housing site enabled by variation to the territory plan 334 and requested changes to zoning, height limits, the number of dwellings and the reduction of office space.

The petition also called on the committee to hold an inquiry. Given the limited time remaining in this Assembly the committee will not be holding an inquiry. The committee is aware of the issues in the petition and these have been raised with the minister during this year's estimates hearings. The committee notes that since the petition was received the government has held consultations on TA216-08 Red Hill, a technical amendment intended to address some of the concerns raised in the petition. Members of the Ninth Assembly may wish to further examine the development of former public housing sites and the approach to consultation taken by this Assembly and government.

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee Report—Speaker's response

MADAM SPEAKER: For the information of members I present the following paper:

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee—Report—*Appropriation Bill 2016-2017 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2016-2017—Speaker's response to recommendation 45, dated 9 August 2016.*

Recommendation 45 of the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-17 is in relation to wi-fi in offices in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee Report—government response

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.24): For the information of members I present:

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee—Report—*Appropriation Bill 2016-2017 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2016-2017—Government response, dated August 2016.*

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

The select committee's report touches on a wide range of issues, the outcome of which has been 144 recommendations to government, and I will broadly address the structure of the government's response to these recommendations in a moment. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the committee and to particularly acknowledge the work of Pegasus Economics in providing a broad-reaching and independent assessment of the budget. The analysis provided a number of important observations regarding the activities of government and I certainly remind the Assembly that the government has already responded to those observations with a copy of that government response being provided to the chair of the committee on 4 July 2016.

The 2016-17 budget is a budget for an even better Canberra, our suburbs, our people, our businesses and our economy. The 2016-17 budget will ensure that Canberra remains the world's most livable city and a place for Canberrans to be proud of, with an economy in which we can all feel confidence. The budget ensures we have the right services, the right facilities and the right infrastructure that our residents and businesses deserve and expect.

This budget, like those before it, delivers more services today and in coming years and builds on the government's plan to secure a better future for Canberra. It delivers quality schools, quality roads, quality hospitals and quality community services. This budget delivers support for the economy and a significant investment in new infrastructure that will deliver jobs for Canberra.

In the 2016-17 budget the government makes a stand against domestic and family violence so that Canberrans can feel safe in their homes. In addition, the nearly \$21½ million safe families package will also drive the next phase of improvements in a whole-of-government, community-backed response to family violence. The ACT has joined with the commonwealth and all other states and territories for a national campaign to counter violence against women and children.

Through the budget we are continuing to make taxes fairer, simpler and more efficient. We have further slashed stamp duty, we have cut payroll tax again and we have abolished insurance tax altogether. We have adhered to a fiscal strategy that achieves an operating balance over time, offsetting temporary deficits during periods of more depressed economic activity, with surpluses in periods of stronger economic activity. The key to this strategy is the responsible management of the territory's public finances, balancing sustainable taxation revenues with a high standard of service delivery. This approach has given us the flexibility to deal with economic circumstances as they arise. We have supported the ACT economy in light of the commonwealth Liberal government's cuts and we continue to implement a coordinated and compassionate response to the complex issue that is asbestos removal.

The budget's fiscal position continues to improve and I will have more good news on that later in the week. In this budget the ACT government is supporting the economy in the short term and continuing to deliver appropriate services to the community while building a strong operating balance over the medium term.

The government has taken a specific course of action to support the economy. We have held out a helping hand to the community. We have invested in even better suburbs, even better parks, even better roads and much improved transport for Canberrans. We have invested in the infrastructure and long-term projects that our city needs. So this is indeed a budget for an even better Canberra.

The estimates committee report presents 144 recommendations that cover a broad range of matters. It is not my intention to go through each of the committee's recommendations individually in the Assembly this morning—the government's response serves that purpose—but overall the government has agreed to or noted the majority of recommendations included in the committee's report. Specifically, we have agreed to 58 recommendations, agreed in principle to 27, agreed in part to three, noted 49 and not agreed to just seven of the recommendations.

In instances where recommendations were not agreed, the government has considered the matters being raised and has not supported these recommendations on the basis that the additional information sought or the release of particular information could be considered premature and/or the benefits of doing so are limited or the government does not consider that the recommendation aligns with current legislative practice or, indeed, our existing policy intent. A response has been provided to each individual recommendation.

In closing, I do not consider the report of the estimates committee and its recommendations raise any issues that would prevent the passage of the appropriation bill or the Office of Legislative Assembly appropriation bill. On behalf of the government, I thank the committee for its consideration of the bills and its report and I commend the government response and an outstanding budget to the Assembly.

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

Election Commitments Costing Amendment Bill 2016

Mr Barr, by leave, presented the bill, its explanatory statement, a Human Rights Act compatibility statement and *Guidelines for costing election commitments 2016*.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.30): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Under Treasurer, I am presenting the *Guidelines for costing election commitments* and the amendments to the election commitments costing bill for the Assembly's consideration.

The guidelines are issued by the Under Treasurer pursuant to section 7 of the Election Commitments Costing Act 2012. I note that the guidelines are dependent on the outcomes of the amendments being introduced today, and may require further revisions pending those outcomes.

This bill has been prepared in response to feedback I have received following consultation with other parties in this place on the draft guidelines. The consultative process was undertaken in recognition of a suggestion made by the Australia and New Zealand School of Government institute for governance into the operation of the act following the 2012 Assembly election. The review was commissioned in accordance with section 14 of the act. Section 14 has since been removed in accordance with its expiry on 31 October 2014.

The government, in its response to the review, agreed to suggestion 5, albeit with a modified process. Broadly, the government agreed to engage with the other parties regarding the content of the guidelines, with a view to incorporating any amendments prior to their tabling in this the final sitting period.

The bill that I present today proposes an amendment to the act following consultation with other parties. Primarily, it amends the act to make the issuance of written guidelines a requirement of the director-general and to allow each party to withdraw up to six individual policy costing requests after the costings have been completed and returned to the respective party.

The guidelines I present today for the Assembly's information have been amended by the Under Treasurer to reflect this change, in addition to other alterations to procedural arrangements. I note that the guidelines have been amended such that receipt of a costing request will only trigger the public release of the name of the requester, details of the date the request was received, and the name of the policy proposal, but not the request itself. This approach does not require an amendment to the act, as subsection 5(4) specifies that only "the election commitment to which the request relates" must be made publicly available. In terms of practicalities, this will mean that, should a costing not be withdrawn, both the costing request and the costing itself will be made publicly available once the costing has been finalised and after the applicable review period. I further understand the guidelines have been amended to allow requesters 48 hours rather than 24 hours to review Treasury costings. This approach will apply for the entire costing period apart from the final week, the week prior to election day, when the review period would reduce to 24 hours.

I thank Mr Coe and Mr Rattenbury for their feedback on the guidelines on behalf of their respective parties. I commend the Election Commitments Costing Amendment Bill to the Assembly and have tabled the *Guidelines for costing election commitments 2016* on behalf of the Under Treasurer.

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

Standing and temporary orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent orders of the day Nos. 1 and 2, Executive business—Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 (No. 2) and Public Health Amendment Bill 2016—being called on and debated forthwith.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 (No 2)

Debate resumed from 2 August 2016, on motion by **Mr Corbell**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.36): The opposition will be supporting this bill. It implements recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on statutory limitation periods. It provides the time limits within which civil litigation can be initiated by survivors of child sexual abuse by amending the Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002 and the Limitation Act 1985. The bill also makes amendments to the Victims of Crime Act 1994 to increase the victim services levy. The bill also makes minor amendments to the Supreme Court Act 1933 to improve the operation of each amended law.

Implementations of the royal commission recommendations are that state and territory governments should introduce legislation to remove any limitation period that applies to a claim for damages brought by a person where that claim is founded on the personal injury of the person resulting from sexual abuse of the person in an institutional context when that person is or was a child; that state and territory governments should ensure that the limitation period is removed with retrospective effect and regardless of whether or not a claim was subject to a limitation period in the past; that state and territory governments should expressly preserve the relevant courts' existing jurisdictions and powers so that any jurisdiction or power to stay proceedings is not affected by the removal of the limitation period; and that state and territory governments should implement these recommendations to remove limitation periods as soon as possible, even if that requires that they be implemented before the royal commission's recommendations in relation to the duty of institutions and identifying a proper defendant are implemented.

We have consulted and we have not received any negative comments about this from any stakeholders. We have received comment in relation to the statute of limitations, and we have received comment that the increased services levy does give more support to victims of crime, which we support.

As I indicated, the opposition will be supporting this bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Education, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs and Minister for Road Safety) (10.38): I am pleased to support this bill today. The major change in the bill is that it removes limitation periods from the Civil Law (Wrongs) Act 2002 and the Limitation Act 1985 that apply to claims for damages brought by survivors of child sexual abuse in an institutional context.

It is a sad reality that the ACT community is not immune from the grievous injustices of the past that have been raised through the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Sexual abuse in this context often takes many years to come to light, sometimes because the nature of the abuse and the fact that it is perpetrated against children means it is not reported by the victims. Sometimes the abuse could be covered up or negligently ignored.

As the commission continues, we can expect to hear more tragic stories of this nature. It is vital that the victims of these tragic historical acts are able to come forward, in some cases many years or decades later, and have access to legal remedies. We have already changed the laws to allow criminal matters to be tried even when outside the usual statute of limitations. However, civil matters have remained an issue.

Criminal charges are not always possible. The perpetrator may have passed away, for example. There is often, however, a case to be made against an institution that may be culpable of the offence. It may have covered it up or failed to report it or been negligent in some other way. Many victims need to, and have a right to, seek redress and justice through civil proceedings. But, as the royal commission concludes, limitation periods are a significant, sometimes insurmountable, barrier to survivors of child sexual abuse pursuing civil litigation for damages for their injury and loss.

Therefore there is a clear interim recommendation from the royal commission to lift the statute of limitations for not just criminal but also civil matters. We will continue to watch as the final recommendations are made and other jurisdictions take action, but I am pleased to cooperate with a government that is working quickly to respond to these issues.

I wrote to the attorney recently urging him to take action on this matter. I appreciate that he has responded positively, and thank him for introducing the amendments we are debating today.

This bill also amends the Victims of Crime Act 1994 to increase the victim services levy from \$40 to \$50 on commencement and from \$50 to \$60 from 1 July next year. This levy applies to court-ordered fines payable by adults convicted of an offence. The purpose is to improve victim support services, an initiative that I support. I also note the safeguards in place for the levy so that it does not impact on people who are particularly vulnerable or suffering from undue hardship in having to pay a fine. Most notably, the court has a specific power to exempt people from liability to pay the levy in these circumstances.

With those brief remarks, I am happy to support the bill today.

MR CORBELL (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Attorney-General, Minister for Health, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change) (10.41), in reply: I would like to thank members for their support of this bill today. The government is proud to be implementing recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse. The work of the royal commission has been groundbreaking. Their painstaking and heart-wrenching work must surely serve as a turning point in the way Australia deals with child abuse.

The commission has acknowledged that the impacts of child sex abuse work against survivors being able to disclose abuse, “let alone seek legal advice and commence proceedings”. Survivors also have difficulties identifying the connection between the abuse they have suffered and the resulting psychological impacts they endure. They may have been subjected to ongoing or repeated abuse where it is not possible to pinpoint an actual point in time in which the injury was done. It may have been perpetuated by more than one person, who may be deceased or no longer within the institution. The institution itself may have ceased to exist.

Often victims must proceed in litigation against large and authoritative institutions, meaning that there is the possibility of a significant and continuing power imbalance between the survivor and the institution. This imbalance, coupled with the long-term impacts of child sex abuse, leave many survivors less able to confront these situations.

Survivors who do commence proceedings against institutions risk the issue of limitation periods being raised, resulting in lengthy litigation about whether or not the claim that they have made can even be brought. Institutions often have far more resources than individuals and are often better able to finance lengthy legal proceedings. The royal commission stated that this “involves substantial legal costs without any consideration of the merits of the case”, and that “this risk is enough to prevent many survivors from commencing civil litigation”.

All of these factors contribute to the limited capacity of survivors of child sexual abuse to seek compensation by way of common law damages for distress and trauma caused by the abuse they suffered as a child. This bill aims to remove these barriers and allow survivors to seek compensation for the impact the abuse has had on them and their lives. The bill sends a strong message to institutions that traditions and cultures of secrecy, unaccountability and obstruction should not prevent them from being sued and publicly held to account for the damage they have caused if they are responsible for that abuse.

The bill also makes minor and technical corrections to section 68N(6) and section 680(4) of the Supreme Court Act 1933 so that these sections apply where the acquittal occurs on the day the Supreme Court Amendment Act 2016 commenced, not just before or after that day, as it is currently worded.

The bill also makes amendments to the Victims of Crime Act 1994 to increase the victim services levy to improve the capacity of the territory to support victims of crime under the recently introduced and improved victims of crime financial assistance scheme. The increase is from \$40 to \$50 when the bill commences and then to \$60 from 1 July 2017.

I thank members for their support of the bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Public Health Amendment Bill 2016

Debate resumed from 2 August 2016, on motion by **Ms Fitzharris**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (10.46): I stand today to speak to the Public Health Amendment Bill 2016. My understanding from reading the bill is that there are various internal changes being made about the way that we deal with properties that are a health risk to the public, particularly in relation to hoarding behaviours, and that in doing so the minister will determine the code of practice setting up the guidelines for the Chief Health Officer to deal with insanitary conditions that are caused by hoarding or domestic squalor.

It is important to be mindful of the fact that, in dealing with insanitary conditions, we are not just dealing with a person and their belongings; we are dealing sometimes with a type of mental condition or a mental illness. I hope that, as the minister makes decisions about determining a code of practice, it will be taken into account that some of those that we are dealing with may have complex mental states. I hope that our advice will be sought on how to deal with somebody with a mental illness that is manifesting in hoarding practices. We are happy to be part of that conversation.

The issue of hoarding is rather serious; however, not particularly widespread. I am aware, within my electorate, of approximately half a dozen properties that fall into the category of hoarding or domestic squalor. One property in particular is in McKail street in Stirling, where there is not actually a person residing in the property. However, we know there is an ACT resident who owns the property. We have written to the minister about it a number of times.

I would be more than happy to see a system which can deal with such blocks, because of the impact that they have on those around them. There is a property in Fisher heading in this direction, with dumped car parts, old furniture and general rubbish

starting to build up at the front and on the porch. The concerns that I hear all the time as I am out in the electorate are around fear of vermin, snakes, mice, rats and mosquitoes from swimming pools that have not been touched in many years.

Whilst it is very important to have a high regard for people's freedoms and for people to be able to live as freely as possible within our society, there does come a point at which the impact on those around them does become severe and debilitating for neighbours and other dwellers in the area. In a city where we all live fairly close to each other, there does come a point sometimes when we need to act for the better health of the community. We also need to be mindful that shared fences and shared facilities that we live with are part of people's homes, lives and property, and that we do not encroach upon our neighbours more than we have to. At the point at which their behaviours and their state of living start to invade other people's lives, the government has a role to play.

It is important to protect the freedoms of those in our community so they can get on with their lives. However, supporting the freedom of others is also important. People's desire for collecting things or not disposing of things can obviously get to a point where there are rodents, mice, mosquitoes and rats. Long grass, cars and fuel load on a property can become a fire risk. There can be fire hazards when vehicles and machinery are not properly cared for. The government does need to act when health hazards are created in the community. I hope that this method is functional and works. We will be happy to see how it is implemented in Canberra. Hopefully, the problems that we have to deal with in relation to a dozen or so properties around this city will be dealt with as sensitively as possible but we will still get an outcome ultimately for the community. We will be supporting the bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (10.50): As we have heard, and as many in the health and community sector already know, the issues surrounding hoarding behaviour are extremely complex and personal. The compulsion to hoard belongings, rubbish or even animals is unique to each person, despite the apparent commonalities, and each case therefore needs to be treated with sensitivity, care and compassion. For many people experiencing these issues, it can be years before other members of the community or the government support services are made aware, and it can be quite distressing to be finally confronted with the negative implications of any subsequent interventions.

That is why it has been so pleasing to see the ACT undertake a range of serious and genuinely collaborative approaches, over the past few years or so in particular, as the understanding grows in the clinical world of the causes and possible treatments. I would like to acknowledge the ongoing work of both the Canberra Living Conditions Network and the hoarding case management group in this regard as an excellent example of a coordinated whole-of-government approach to difficult circumstances that can present a hazard to not just those suffering from a condition, but at times also negatively impact on those around them and, as the bill clearly states, can present an actual safety risk to the community.

This bill has been brought through the Assembly with a degree of speed. I do, however, appreciate Minister Fitzharris's willingness to discuss this with members of

the Assembly since presentation and to talk publicly to the need for these amendments to pass in order to respond to certain specific cases sooner rather than later. Ideally, it is always preferable to give the community time to absorb any such legislative changes, but I am advised that there is broad support for the need, and high confidence in the ACT Health Protection Service in particular to ensure that we are seeking enforcement of this nature as both a last resort and in conjunction with the appropriate support services.

Clause 5, which amends the act to make it an offence regardless of whether the person intends to cause an insanitary condition, raises some challenging issues about personal responsibility and understanding of the nature or severity of impact on others. Indeed, it raises issues of criminal responsibility and understanding of right and wrong, considering that it is accepted that most acts of hoarding occur as a mental health disorder aligned with obsessive compulsive disorders.

However, the proposed code of practice, the strong community advocacy expressed in the Canberra Living Conditions Network members and other providers, and the ongoing functions of the hoarding case management group or its future iterations, provide me with assurances that, again, criminal or punitive sanctions will be the absolute last resort, particularly for socially isolated or otherwise vulnerable people.

As I have said in a range of debates that may be seen to encroach on vulnerable members of our community this year, the ACT Greens will maintain our connections to community service providers and remain open to reviewing or seeking further amendments at a later stage if the application of the bill does not turn out as it is envisaged.

I also appreciate that the new sections relating to abatement orders maintain the oversight and decision-making power of the Magistrates Court, which is also a clear acknowledgement of the potential complexity of these cases. In a similar approach, it is also positive to allow for the proposed new code of practice to be a disallowable instrument, thereby ensuring the ongoing attention and consideration of the Assembly.

As I have said, it is a credit to ACT Health that they have spent the time and energy to work with a range of government and non-government agencies to engender this level of trust and professional respect, such that a bill like this could be presented and debated in such a short period. The ACT Greens will therefore be supporting this bill, in recognition that any actions taken under this new triage of responses will be similarly in the same vein of consultation, collaboration and coordination.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.54): I am pleased to speak today on the Public Health Amendment Bill 2016 which amends the Public Health Act 1997. Specifically, the bill seeks to amend the act to allow the minister to determine a code of practice setting out guidelines for the Chief Health Officer about the public health management of insanitary conditions caused by hoarding and domestic squalor, to improve administrative mechanisms so that the ACT Magistrates Court can respond to allegations of insanitary conditions, and to correct an oversight in the structuring of an offence provision for causing or suffering an insanitary condition.

Hoarding behaviour was recently included for the first time in the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, the DSM-5, and that lists the diagnostic criteria associated with hoarding behaviour. It can include persistent difficulty in discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value. This difficulty is due to a perceived need to save the items and the distress associated with discarding them. The difficulty of discarding possessions results in the accumulation of possessions that congest and clutter active living areas and substantially compromise their intended use. If living areas are uncluttered, it is only because of the interventions of third parties such as other family members, cleaners or relevant authorities. The hoarding causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning, including maintaining a safe environment for self and others. The hoarding is not attributable to another medical condition—for example, brain injury, cerebrovascular disease or Prader-Willi syndrome—and the hoarding is not better explained by the symptoms of another mental disorder such as obsessions in obsessive compulsive disorder, decreased energy and major depressive disorder, delusions in schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder, cognitive deficits in major neurocognitive disorder or restricted interest in autism spectrum disorder.

Recently, for the first time, we have seen hoarding behaviour included as a recognised mental condition. Hoarding behaviour and squalid domestic conditions can affect many aspects of a person's life. It can also affect their neighbours and other people. It can require public health management to address the serious health risks that may arise—for example, fire risks and risks to public health. Hoarding and domestic squalor can occur in both private residential and public housing settings. It is not restricted to any one area of our community.

As my colleague Mrs Jones outlined, I am sure many of us in our role as a member of the Legislative Assembly have been contacted by people, often neighbours, who are concerned about activities of hoarding and squalor in a nearby property. Just as one example, to add to Mrs Jones's example, back in early 2015 I was contacted by a concerned constituent about hoarding and squalor in a property located at the front of their battleaxe block. The constituent had been in contact with both ACT Health and the fire authorities about public health and fire risks. I quote from their email:

The party wall between my property and theirs has collapsed because of the sheer volume of 'stuff' that has been piled against it ... My mother's cat regularly brings rats in. They must be running riot in the yard ... and where there are vermin there are snakes. My biggest concern though, is the enormous fire risk that this accumulated rubbish presents to my mother's granny flat. It is one huge tinderbox of filth that will go up in a heartbeat and take all buildings in proximity with it. This is a huge worry to me ...

I have heard from other constituents who have been trying to sell their own property. Real estate agents have told them that it is the hoarding and squalor of the property nearby, often next door, that is putting off prospective purchasers of their properties. Hopefully this bill may make it easier for health officials to deal with unsanitary conditions arising from domestic squalor and hoarding such as that situation that was brought to my attention. There have been other examples.

I have consulted with some other stakeholders on this bill. A number of them who work in the public housing and tenancy area were not aware of this bill until I brought it to their attention. Some of the feedback I have received from them includes uncertainty as to what the code of practice is, whether it has been developed and who was consulted on it. They believe it would make more sense to develop the code of practice, consult with experts and then give all MLAs an opportunity to understand what would be in the code of practice and how it would work. Their feedback includes, "Will the content of the code of practice be informed by input from the Canberra Living Conditions Network?" This is a network of interested parties set up specifically to look into hoarding behaviour and squalor. They ask, "Where will resources to support people affected by hoarding and squalor come from?"

Another issue brought to my attention is uncertainty as to how the act, as amended by the bill, interacts with reporting of neglect, abuse or risk of harm to children. For example, where there is a squalor or hoarding case involving children or young people, does this trigger the requirements about reporting abuse and neglect of children and young people as set out in the Children and Young People Act 2008?

It is, and will be, very important for people living with domestic squalor and hoarding to get the support services they need to help them comply with the act as amended by the bill. Obviously, while we are very supportive of the changes outlined in the bill today, it is something that we need to watch with caution into the future.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo—Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services and Assistant Minister for Health) (11.00), in reply: I thank members for their contributions today. Certainly, noting the complex and sensitive nature of this issue, I thank them for their thoughtful contributions. The Public Health Amendment Bill 2016 will improve the government's public health response to alleged insanitary conditions occurring in residential areas. The bill, in improving public health measures, will lessen the serious public health and community risks associated with the management of insanitary conditions.

An insanitary condition is a condition that is reasonably considered to be or likely to become a public health risk and generally at odds with acceptable community standards. These conditions can be caused by a number of factors including compulsive hoarding-like behaviours, squalor, neglect or the keeping of many animals in poor conditions. Properties that suffer from insanitary conditions may pose serious public health risks such as the production of offensive odours and increased vermin and insect activity. In residential or highly urbanised areas, insanitary conditions can have dramatic impacts on neighbouring residents including diminished urban amenity and freedom to enjoy their home and property.

The ACT government has been managing several cases of insanitary conditions for a number of years with limited success, as noted by some members this morning. The management of these cases can often be complex as the conditions normally occur on private property. Sustained clean-up efforts are often impeded by a relapse of the insanitary condition. In one instance, as I recalled last week, ACT Health officers

removed a large amount of rotting food waste from a single property, which was adversely affecting the quality of life of neighbouring residents. In acknowledging that residential insanitary conditions present both serious public health and community issues, this bill will lessen the potential serious health risks of recurring insanitary conditions caused by hoarding-like behaviours and domestic squalor through an improved public health response.

Where a person fails to address an insanitary condition, authorised public health officers can issue the responsible person with an abatement notice which directs a person to remedy the condition through measures such as cleaning the property or removing or relocating excess waste. In extreme circumstances where there is a public health risk not remedied by the property owner, the Chief Health Officer may seek an abatement order from the ACT Magistrates Court to guarantee compliance with an abatement notice.

The current process of seeking and implementing an order is a lengthy process which consequently means that an insanitary condition might continue for several months after a complaint, without intervention. This lengthy process is considered to leave occupants, neighbouring residents and the broader community exposed to a prolonged public health risk, in addition to diminished urban amenity and community sentiment.

The bill improves administrative mechanisms for the submission and implementation of an abatement order as granted by the ACT Magistrates Court. The bill will enable the Chief Health Officer to apply to the ACT Magistrates Court to consider the issue of a subsequent abatement order to remedy an insanitary condition if it re-emerges as a serious public health risk within 12 months after an order is issued. In deciding whether or not to issue an abatement order, the ACT Magistrates Court has independent consideration to the alleged insanitary condition, actions taken by the property owner and any government interventions. The Chief Health Officer will also independently review any decision to apply for an abatement order from the ACT Magistrates Court in consultation with relevant government and non-government agencies.

This bill will improve regulatory transparency in the public health management of instances concerning hoarding and domestic squalor through the determination of a code of practice. In line with best-practice principles, any such code of practice will ensure that the Chief Health Officer, in undertaking any public health intervention relating to insanitary conditions resulting from hoarding-like behaviours or domestic squalor, must consider human rights and social implications resulting from such a decision.

The code of practice will ensure that abatement orders will continue to be used only as a measure of last resort and when in the public interest. It will also include an internal review process whereby a complainant may request an ACT Health review of the decision to issue an abatement notice or abatement order. In response to Ms Lawder's commentary, it will certainly include members of both government and non-government organisations including the Canberra living network, which has been involved in the discussions around this issue for some time and certainly will continue to be.

While residential insanitary conditions impact only a small number of people, they often present a significant public health and community issue. In line with the government's commitment to transparency and accountability, this bill will help to improve ACT Health's management of insanitary conditions associated with hoarding-like behaviour or domestic squalor as well as community awareness and understanding about the related complex and sensitive public health and social issues.

I should reiterate that this will not eliminate the occurrence of insanitary conditions in the ACT, but this bill will vastly improve ACT Health's ability to better manage the public health impacts of hoarding-like behaviours and domestic squalor in line with best-practice methods and achieve harmonisation with other states and territories. The bill therefore makes critical steps to help minimise the public health and community impacts of insanitary conditions.

To ensure that government responses continue to be conducted in the best interests of the public and the property owner, the ACT government has established an intergovernmental working group to provide operational advice. The ACT government is committed to ensuring a best-practice approach is taken to manage cases of insanitary conditions in residential areas and will continue to facilitate this multi-agency approach. All relevant government and non-government organisations will continue to provide operational advice on the management of hoarding and domestic squalor under the Public Health Act to ensure that regulatory actions are employed only when in the public interest and as a measure of last resort.

The bill also makes a minor change to the offence structure for causing or allowing an insanitary condition. The current provision is considered impractical as it requires that the person responsible for the condition believes it to be insanitary and that this belief be objectively proven. The bill will update this offence so that an insanitary condition is one that an ordinarily reasonable person would consider insanitary. This construction takes a more practical approach and better aligns the provision with the interpretation that an insanitary condition is generally considered as being offensive to acceptable community health standards.

The bill makes minor changes to existing administrative processes under the Public Health Act 1997 and, in doing so, will provide public health and community benefits relating to recurring insanitary conditions. The bill marks another milestone in achieving the government's priorities of livability, opportunity and a healthy and smart community. It is a good outcome for our community. Again, I thank members for their thoughtful contribution to the debate and their support of the legislation.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Standing orders—suspension

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

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent orders of the day Assembly business, relating to the Report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017 and the Government response, being called on and debated cognately with orders of the day Nos. 3 and 4, Executive business, Appropriation Bill 2016-2017 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2016-2017.

Appropriation Bill 2016-2017

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2016-2017

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee report

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee—government response]

Debate resumed from 9 June 2016.

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—proposed expenditure

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 3, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 4, and Assembly business orders of the day relating to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017 and the government response.

Standing order 180 sets down the order in which the bill will be considered in the detail stage. Any schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown.

With the concurrence of the Assembly, I am proposing that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory. If this is the wish of the Assembly, schedule 1 will be considered by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory, then the clauses prior to schedule 2 and then the title.

ACT Executive—Schedule, Part 1.1

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.11): At the outset I would like to thank those who have been involved in the estimates committee process—the members of the committee but also, of course, an extensive number of government officials that came forward and answered questions, provided answers to questions taken on notice and so forth. Once again we have gone through what was a pretty rigorous process to look at the budget in detail.

Obviously, we will be looking at each line item in this budget in talking about the strategic direction that the executive and this government are taking the ACT. It is very clear that it is a different direction in many parts to the direction that the opposition would seek to see the ACT go in, and we will not be supporting the budget at the conclusion of this debate.

There are some elements that we are comfortable with, but there are significant points of difference. I would like to go through those at the outset to outline in the broad why it is that we will not be supporting this budget. It is clear that this year, with the election to be in October, the ACT is at somewhat of a crossroads in terms of where the ACT will be going.

To an extent, that is a good thing. That is part of the democratic process. I hope that the debate does stay around the truth and is about the facts. I note that the first Labor scare campaign has been debunked roundly by the *Canberra Times* and experts today. But I hope that the debate is focused on the issues, what it is that matters to the people of the ACT, and that we see less of the sort of fake Labor scare campaigns that we have seen debunked by experts today. I do not think that that helps with the debate.

I am certainly very positive about our future. I think that with the right policy settings the future for the ACT is bright. But there is a reality. There are a lot of Canberrans out there who are facing a lot of pressures. They are facing pressures personally on their household budgets. I know that Mrs Jones who is here today does a lot of doorknocking out there. She tells me firsthand about the pressure that Canberra families are feeling in paying their rates, paying the other fees and charges like rego—just the difficulty that they are experiencing living in this town and making ends meet.

But at the other end there is also this problem with the ACT budget. The Treasurer has been promising surpluses but delivering deficits. There is also the massive increase that we see in debt and in deficits over the years. Be it at the micro level in households out there in places like Kambah, Belconnen, Weston Creek or parts of Tuggeranong, or when it comes to looking at the budget in detail, it is clear that across the ACT there are significant issues.

Along with that, what we are seeing in many parts are declining services. Fundamental services that should be priorities for this government are declining. Madam Deputy Speaker, you will recall that it was you who cut \$15 million from ACT Policing when you were the police minister. These are the sorts of services that are being reduced across this town that are hurting average Canberrans.

The biggest point of difference in many ways, the starkest example of the point of difference between the future that we envisage and that of the Labor government, is the expenditure on the tram. Not only is it an enormous amount of money that is going to cause cost of living increases through increases in rates and other fees and charges that this government needs to raise to pay for the tram. It will also mean that money will be taken away from other vital services that are desperately needed, including, as I said, the \$15 million that you cut from ACT Policing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I think it is also a great example of where a government has strayed away from what the people actually want, what the people need, what the priorities of the government should be, towards the priorities of a self-indulgent government that has been around just too long. After 15 years, it is very clear that what drives this government is its own agenda, its own priorities—those of maintaining government with the Greens. It is much more about parliamentary deals and maintaining power and legacy projects for Mr Corbell and others than it is about the needs of mums and dads and retirees across this city.

Our priorities very much are in health, in education, in growing the economy and building the city. Each of us will speak to those areas as we progress through the budget. But it is the executive that sets the parameters. It is the executive that makes the decisions, or should be making the decisions—the right decisions for the people of Canberra. It is an executive in many ways that has failed the people of Canberra.

I turn to some of the issues at stake. I will talk in much more detail during our consideration of the other line items. However, when we look at our health system, it is a health system that is in many ways in crisis. We saw recently critical notices being put in by the staff at the women and children's hospital because they do not have enough staff. We know that this is a government that was proposing an \$800 million rebuild of the Canberra Hospital. It pulled that money out to pay for its tram. This is a health system that is struggling to cope. It is the people of Canberra that pay the price when they wait in ED longer than anyone else in Australia.

Equally, what we are seeing is kids in our schools being left behind. Just as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, cut \$15 million from the police budget, I remind members that it was Mr Barr who cut 23 local public schools when he was the education minister. As a consequence, what we are now finding is that many of our public schools are over capacity, are bursting at the seams and are under enormous pressure. The pressure was so great that we saw the horrific images, under your leadership, Madam Deputy Speaker, as the education minister, of a child locked in a cage. It is just terrible to think that that is happening in our education system.

I am very proud that the Canberra Liberals have announced an \$85 million education package which will address those in need, kids with special needs, not just in the government system but in the non-government system, those in highest need in our four specialised schools, and \$60 million to support infrastructure across our public school system where we know there are significant capacity constraints. I am very proud that we have made that announcement.

I find it incongruous that we have seen the criticism from the Labor government about Liberal Party expenditure proposals and policy proposals in health and in education. We get this bizarre scare campaign. We have seen the counter narrative, the odd narrative, from Mr Barr. In one breath almost he is accusing us of reckless spending on health and education and then he is saying that we are the architects of austerity; that we are not going to spend anything. If you are going to run scare campaigns, I would say that you need to work out what that narrative is going to be. Are we

spending too much on health and education or are we not spending enough? You cannot have it both ways.

Then when it comes to building our city, which is another one of my team's priorities, what we have seen over the last decade is a perversion in the way that this town is planned. Because of the strangling effect of the lease variation charge, we have seen real degradation, particularly in Civic and in other town centres. What we have also seen is the manipulation of the land release system. The article in the *Canberra Times* that quoted Khalid Ahmed was very illustrative of what is happening.

What is happening is that we are seeing our unique Canberra suburbs, the great character of our Canberra suburbs, being eroded. Go out to Wright and go out to Coombs and look at the monolithic apartment buildings that are being built in our suburbs. Meanwhile, we see vacancy and decay in the town centres and the city centre. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

What we do want to see is reform of the land release system. We will talk more about that at later stages of this debate. But we also want to see vibrancy and building back into the city and into our town centres. That can be done easily through the repeal of the lease variation charge, which raises very little but stops tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars of economic activity. Not only will it create jobs, not only will it create building activity and economic activity, but it will breathe life back into our decaying town centres, including Civic.

I come next to the public transport system. I have no doubt that Mr Coe will speak lyrically about this. He has done an enormous amount of work to make the case that the tram is the wrong solution. I commend him for litigating that argument. But he has not just said what is wrong with our public transport and criticised it, whether it be the buses or the trams.

Mr Coe has released a comprehensive transport plan for all of Canberra. If you have not had a look at it, there is a website and there are brochures. It is a really good, comprehensive plan that was lauded by experts when it was released. It is to be commended. What it does is increase frequency and increase direct routes. I think the impact of it is that we have seen such a desperate attempt by this government to copy elements of it. What we have seen is a government that then at almost every step tried to mimic Mr Coe's plan and to duplicate it because it is such a good plan. One of the best forms of praise and flattery is imitation. I think that the government's imitation of our policies goes to the excellence of Mr Coe's work.

I turn to the economy. I am very keen to see economic growth, strong economic growth. I unashamedly support the private sector, not at the exclusion of public sector jobs. The reality is that it does not need to be one or the other. You can be pro-business and pro-worker at the same time. I am unashamedly pro-business and pro-worker. But what we have seen emerge in this government, particularly with its closeness to the CFMEU, are anti-business practices. It is a class warfare view of the world that I think belongs better in the 1950s than it does in the modern era. But that is what we have seen.

If we have strong economic growth, if we have businesses that are growing and are employing more people, that is good for Canberrans and it is good for this city. The best I think we can do is see more jobs growth in the private sector and the public sector. We will be hiring more nurses, police and other staff across the front line. But what I would say is that we also want to see private sector growth.

Look at the secret MOU signed off by the government and Unions ACT, which I note is now campaigning on this scare campaign on behalf of the Labor government: it is anti-business. Look at the EBA that has been signed with the CFMEU and the light rail consortium: it excludes many local businesses, which I think is very disappointing. It is very disappointing that the interests of the CFMEU have been put above local jobs and local businesses.

We will make it easier to do business in this town. We have released a number of policies already. Reducing rates will help with that, as will the change to the lease variation charge. But in many ways it is a cultural change, one that is forward looking, one that is about saying, "Let us support business," rather than a policy that is all about protecting the interests of the CFMEU. Madam Deputy Speaker, you would be well aware of the issues with the CFMEU and your office's closeness to that organisation.

There are many things that we will do that will change the nature of this city. We have announced many policies already. We have made it very clear that we will not continue with the very unfair tax changes that Mr Barr has been making with another \$266 million of stamp duty that he is going to put on to our rates. He has made it very clear that that is happening. It is not a matter of if; it is simply a matter of when.

We have announced policies across all of the portfolio areas and we will continue to do so. As I said, I am very optimistic about our future. I think that we have great potential in this city. It is a wonderful city. But the decisions that this executive have been making have not been made in the best interests of Canberra, in the best interests of many Canberrans. It is quite clear that the decisions being made by this executive are being made in their own best interests and those of their fellow travellers, be it the CFMEU or others.

We are heading in the wrong direction. As I said, we will not be supporting the budget in its entirety. But we look forward to talking to each line item to critique where this government is going wrong but also to outline our alternative vision for this city that is focused on all Canberrans and not just the favoured few of the Labor Party.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.27): The ACT executive has powers under the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act to govern the territory and execute and maintain enactments and laws. In this appropriation the ACT executive will be leading the government's agenda in progressing key priorities across directorates for 2016-17. Three cabinet committees have been established to drive the government's priorities in transport reform, social inclusion and equality, and economic growth and urban renewal.

The government will be providing ongoing support for the seventh minister in the ACT executive and associated on-costs as part of the expansion of the Assembly from 17 to 25 members during the 2016-17 fiscal year. A total of \$3.114 million over four years from the 2016-17 fiscal year is provided for this purpose. I commend this part of the budget to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—Schedule 1, Part 1.2

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.29): This is an area that in many ways has attracted some of the greatest controversy over the last period, and it is of great disappointment to me and I know many thousands of people in our community that this government has chosen to attack our community club sector. The community club sector is facing great uncertainty in this town. Our community clubs are a real asset to this town. They provide really good venues to go to.

I have spoken in this place before about the community clubs that I have been to. I was in a club last night at an event, and I go regularly to the club near me, the Raiders Club in Weston. The reality is that most people go to their local clubs for the service they offer. The food now offered by clubs is mostly of restaurant quality; it is very good fare. They are a place for people to meet and socialise. They are central to our community. They are places often where you can take a family for a meal that is affordable rather than to the higher end restaurants that are difficult for a family to afford.

But what is so important about our community clubs is the support they provide to our community—the support for local footy teams, community organisations and many local charities. The reality is that without those clubs many of those community organisations would struggle to stay afloat and stay alive. The members of those community organisations, local footy teams and so on, probably would not be able to participate. If you want to play sport, it is an expensive business by the time you buy your football boots or hockey sticks or cricket gear. The fact that clubs support those local teams takes a lot of pressure off families and enables those great community organisations that a lot of times are providing support for our kids to survive in our community.

But this government has launched almost an ideological assault on our clubs, and that is ironic given that the Labor Party are funded by clubs. Maybe they have a chip on their shoulder about it; I do not know. I know there is significant criticism about that, and, although I am a very strong supporter of our community clubs, there is no question that the fact that the government owns pokie machines and then regulates the industry is compromising.

I quote Jon Stanhope about this:

My very strong view is that the Labor Party should not be in a position where it's perceived as owning poker machines and facilitating gambling.

Mr Stanhope has said the Labor Party simply should not be associated with gambling and that the association of gambling and the conflicts of interest, perceived or otherwise, are both morally and politically unacceptable. And I concur, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The reality is that the Tradies, owned by the CFMEU, and the Labor clubs, owned by the Labor Party, are funding politics in this town and the organisations that regulate them. There is no way you can get away from that conflict of interest, and it is people like Mr Stanhope who are raising these issues—not just me.

Potentially, part of the reason we have seen this ideological assault on our clubs is the desire to suggest there is no conflict of interest. I do not know, but it is genuinely not helping.

I quote from Gwyn Rees, the Chief Executive of ClubsACT:

The ACT Government has attacked Canberra's club industry for far too long ... The Government has deliberately chosen not to consult the industry, which is very disappointing and frustrating, and will leave the community clubs very angry ... We remain opposed to any erosion of the community gaming model.

Of course, he is referring to the plan this government has to put pokies into the casino. We know it is 200 to start with, but there is no doubt that the longer term plans will take that number up closer to 500. And we have been advised that the plan is that those pokies will be coming basically from the CFMEU. There may be other clubs that engage in that sort of deal, but the bulk of those pokies will be coming from the CFMEU.

That gives some insight, does it not, as to why this deal is going ahead? Again, this is a compromised Labor Party that is all about power, and influence and getting money into the coffers of the Labor political machine and the CFMEU, which then donates massive amounts of money to the Labor Party and the Greens. To be honest, outside of the Third World, you probably would not see this bizarre situation where the government of the day owns and controls and is the beneficiary of the gambling assets in a particular jurisdiction. That is incredibly compromising.

I will say again, as I have said many times in this place: we will not be supporting that deal. We will not support pokies going into the casino. We will not allow an end to the community gaming model. Let me be very clear that, if Canberra Liberals form government in October this year, the deal to put pokies into the casino is off. It is off: let me be very clear.

We will work with our community clubs to help them to grow, prosper, and provide ongoing support in this community. Many of the solutions, many of the ways forward for the clubs, are contained in the bipartisan committee report into our club sector conducted by the public accounts committee. As you will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was a debacle with note acceptors. You approved a change to note acceptors; Mr Barr knocked that decision down, reversed that decision and publicly

admonished you. It was very embarrassing for everybody involved, and the clubs were furious because, again, certainty had been denied.

Mr Barr basically said at that stage, “Look, if there’s a bipartisan or tripartisan committee that can find a way forward, then I’ll support it.” He said that, probably with the view that there was no way there would be an outcome. But we did find a way forward, and I commend the members of the public accounts committee for coming up with a good report that provided a path for the future for our community clubs, with a whole series of recommendations. Mr Barr then broke his promise.

Mr Barr said very clearly that if there was a bipartisan or tripartisan way forward on this he would support it. What happened? That exact thing happened—a unanimous report came from the committee, and Mr Barr and his government rejected the bulk of those recommendations. So little wonder that the community clubs are angry and that they no longer trust this government. They have been lied to. The community clubs were told one thing. They acted in good faith; they trusted Mr Barr, and then he reversed his position and destroyed all of the good will by going back on his word. For the community clubs, as it has been for many others in this community, it was the final straw where they felt, understandably, they could no longer trust this government. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

There are obviously issues in gaming and racing beyond community clubs. We worked closely over this term with the racing industry, which provides a significant contribution to the Canberra community. One aspect I would like to turn to is the greyhound industry. A report came out of New South Wales, and no-one would deny there are some very disturbing aspects in that report. I think we are all united in a view that we want to make sure that animal welfare, in this case that of greyhounds, is at the forefront.

A decision in New South Wales was made, and then I think on Facebook, within an hour, Mr Barr said, “Well, we’re shutting down the industry in the ACT.” There is a backlash in New South Wales; the Labor Party in New South Wales opposes this decision, as I understand do the Nationals. There is a current debate to say, “Look, let’s extend it for three years to see if the industry”, a good operating industry, “can clean itself up where there have been problems and see whether we can get the best of both worlds,” without shutting it down.

That is an ongoing debate, and we have said that, rather than rushing to simply mimic the decision in New South Wales—whilst accepting that the impact of the New South Wales industry on our local industry is obviously significant and the two are, in part, intertwined—we want to have a look at this. It is about good government decision-making. Before I decided to Facebook something or tweet out a decision I had made based on one made in another jurisdiction, I would want to sit down with the industry and have a good, close look at the issues within our industry to determine whether it can be a viable and safe industry. I would make a decision based on evidence and the facts about what is happening in the ACT. That is what we will do for that industry.

This is yet again another industry, another area, another sector, where this government has let people down significantly. On the one hand, Labor Party politicians and

Greens politicians in this chamber are the political beneficiaries of enormous amounts of money flowing in through poker machines, taking all that money to fund their political campaigns. On the other hand, they are going out to local clubs in our town and hitting them hard. It is disgraceful, and it shows how distant this government are from the people of Canberra that they dare to stand up and defend these policy decisions while taking the rivers of gold from their own clubs and those of the CFMEU. They are enacting policies and making decisions that are hurting all the other clubs in this town. It is an abomination. The clubs are in uproar about it, and rightly so.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (11.43): The government has continued to deliver on its key strategic policy priorities for the Racing and Gaming portfolio over the past year. In gaming, the government provided a submission in May 2015 to the public accounts committee inquiry into elements impacting on the ACT clubs sector. Following a considerable development period, the majority of reforms under the gaming machine reform package commenced in August 2015. In addition to these specific priorities, additional red tape reduction initiatives have been implemented that benefit both racing and gaming industries.

The gaming machine reform package delivered tax relief for smaller clubs by increasing the minimum tax-free threshold for gaming machine revenue. The centrepiece of the package, however, was the introduction of a trading scheme which allows gaming machine licensees to buy and sell machines from and to one another based on the open market approach. That is exactly the position of government that has been put to the casino in relation to any poker machines for its establishment later.

The number of poker machines in the territory will lessen over time, and in any trading the number of poker machines will lessen. The only people that can provide poker machines to the casino are the clubs in the ACT. The scheme allows clubs to divest themselves of unwanted machines and to relocate proceeds to activities that may help clubs diversify their income streams away from gaming revenue.

The forfeiture provisions have also resulted in a significant drop in the number of gaming machines operating in the territory, and these reductions are expected to continue for the foreseeable future. One really good example of this has been the Burns Club in Kambah. They have invested in a star bistro program which has become very popular. They also have plans to open a childcare centre in what will be a great location. My understanding is that the club's membership has tripled since this move.

Following the government's consideration of the recommendations arising from the PAC inquiry and its response tabled on 17 November, a whole-of-government action plan was developed to guide implementation of the recommendations agreed or agreed in principle by government—25 out of 46 recommendations. The government noted 10 more recommendations and did not agree to 11.

The majority of agreed recommendations are in varying stages of implementation and are providing benefit to both industry and the community more broadly. Some of these recommendations include far-reaching objectives that have the potential to provide significant benefit to not only industry but also government. It is fair to say that given the importance of these reforms in particular, and the need to work carefully with various stakeholders, some are taking longer to implement than others. An update on the progress against the recommendations will be provided as part of the annual report process.

In addition to amendments included in the reform package and the PAC inquiry recommendations, the government has already delivered additional red tape reduction initiatives for our community clubs, including but not limited to flexible arrangements for conducting balance where needed and changes to interstate requirements as well.

I must go to a couple of the comments that Mr Hanson raised in relation to our community clubs. We are a strong supporter of our community clubs, and we have met on a number of occasions to engage with our community clubs and Clubs ACT to ensure that we can support them into the future. I think it was quite outrageous of M Hanson to deliver points to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, while you were in the chair and had little chance to come back at him. I think it is without courage that he did that, and I want to correct the record in relation to his comments on poker machines: the government does not own any poker machines.

We have also done some work for those conducting low-risk lotteries in the ACT. Recent legislative amendments exempt low-risk lotteries from requiring commission approval. For the racing industry, reforms have included simple licensing arrangements for race bookmakers and their agents.

The government continues to work with stakeholders on an ongoing basis to identify, and implement where possible, regulatory reforms. Both the racing and clubs MOUs expire within the next 12 months and, as this is the case, the way forward for both industries will be reviewed in collaboration with stakeholders. Additional red tape reduction and regulatory forms are planned over the coming year, including a new legislative framework for the Lotteries Act 1964 and the Pool Betting Act 1964 aimed at modernising arrangements to provide a contemporary framework for the regulation of these activities.

Access Canberra and the Gambling and Racing Commission are entering the second year of their agreement for the provision of services for the administration of gaming laws, including the control, supervision and regulation of gaming and racing in the ACT. The agreement allows the Gambling and Racing Commission to request work from Access Canberra to fulfil its obligations under the control act and satisfy its objectives as outlined in the 2014-18 strategic plan and the 2015-16 statement of intent. The commission, through Access Canberra, administers the territory's gaming and racing laws and the control, supervision and regulation of gaming and racing in the ACT. The objectives central to the gambling and racing compliance framework are harm minimisation, integrity and protection.

The establishment of Access Canberra as a one-stop shop for ACT government customer and regulatory services has made it easier for businesses to interact with the government. This has given Access Canberra the ability to undertake joint inspections in areas like gaming, liquor and public health protection and regulation and has meant that government officials are not entering venues as often, causing businesses less disruption.

The feedback from licensed businesses, like clubs, has been very positive. The agreement between Access Canberra and the GRC has allowed the commission to review its practices and identify synergies with Access Canberra's licensing, compliance, investigation and support areas, which will ensure that the Gambling and Racing Commission is better positioned to meet its obligations.

Access Canberra, on behalf of the commission, has put in place a risk-based compliance framework which means that resources are directed to where the risks to integrity, community protection or harm minimisation are the greatest. This has been based on considerations of the kinds of harm that might happen to community and individuals, whether the venue has complied in the past, if there are systemic issues or whether an organisation is blatantly disregarding the law.

The objectives central to the gambling and racing compliance framework include harm minimisation, integrity and protection. The importance of harm minimisation in particular in the ACT has long been recognised by the government. Both the research and public health approaches taken support gambling harm minimisation and prevention for our community.

In relation to gambling harm prevention research, the commission initiates research projects that inform its harm prevention activities and strategies. This research program is funded both directly by the commission and also through the problem gambling assistance fund. It gives us a robust evidence base which informs the commission's work and strategies.

Through its partnership with the Australian National University, the commission enlisted the ANU Centre for Gambling and Research to carry out the 2014 survey on gambling health and wellbeing in the ACT. The survey reported on the prevalence of gambling and gaming harm in the ACT during 2014 as well as identifying trends and changes since 2009.

The ANU centre is also conducting a five-year longitudinal study on the experiences of gamblers and family members before, during and after seeking help for gambling harm. This research will inform the commission about the needs of people seeking help for gambling harm and how best to target and provide that assistance. This study is being done in collaboration with New South Wales.

In addition to ANU's research, the ACT Youth Council is currently conducting an action research project funded through the problem gambling assistance fund. This project is focused on improving the awareness of gambling harm and help available for young Canberrans who might be at risk.

The commission will also continue to explore opportunities for research collaboration with other jurisdictions like New South Wales as well as Australia-wide research priorities. I did raise the ANU study with racing ministers at the last forum.

The commission's public health approach is a key aspect of harm minimisation and this approach looks not just at harm to the individual but the potential harms that gambling can cause to our community. It also looks beyond problem gambling and seeks to reduce the harm and incidence of problem gambling in the wider population. It seeks to prevent and reduce gambling harm among all risk groups, as well as provide support and treatment for those already experiencing harm. The commission is charged with delivering support and counselling services for problem gamblers who are experiencing severe harm and will continue to do that. It will also look at reducing the risks and costs of gambling harm for those who might not be experiencing severe harm but, of course, may be at risk.

Like any regulatory regime, the optimal outcome is voluntary compliance. Education plays a key role in maximising compliance and the commission, through Access Canberra, will provide advice and education to the community, individuals, licensees and gambling and racing industry stakeholders through the course of its proactive and reactive compliance programs. The goal is to ensure that all the Gambling and Racing Commission stakeholders understand their rights, obligations and responsibilities under the ACT's gaming laws.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Local Hospital Network—Schedule 1, Part 1.3

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (11.55): I will reserve my comments in detail on health until the debate on the line item which will probably come in on Thursday.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Schedule 1, Part 1.4

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.56): Probably no-one in this chamber has had as much to say on CIT during this Eighth Assembly as I have. I have quite appropriately been its loudest critic and I stand by the constructive criticisms I have made, because they have made CIT a better place.

CIT has had a somewhat turbulent time during the last few years. In the last Assembly, the focus for CIT was on the merger with, or perhaps more correctly the attempted takeover by, the University of Canberra, with the apparent support and encouragement of the ACT government. It was a difficult time for CIT and it took valuable time and resources away from its core business of delivering vocational education to thousands of ACT and further afield students.

Move forward to 2013 and CIT was again embroiled in controversy as it struggled, and at times, frankly, failed, to deliver appropriate support to an examination of a range of issues brought by staff around what they believed was unfair treatment at the hands of senior CIT staff and the executive.

During last year, once again CIT was attracting all the wrong sort of publicity as it came to light that it was struggling to meet student needs and industry requirements in its electro technology courses.

CIT was the subject of a considerable amount of scrutiny in the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs inquiry into vocational education. It faced an ASQA audit and those results did not entirely satisfy the committee's concerns over the status and completeness of its student capstone assessment. During the estimates hearing CIT officers also faced a number of questions about this, and it has had to provide additional assurances to the committee about ongoing assessment.

The minister tabled her response to the committee report's recommendations last week and, while the government has agreed or agreed in principle to most of them, there are some that are merely noted and one not agreed. On balance, I think that is a reasonable outcome for the committee and for the industry and its apprentices that were under scrutiny.

I think the evidence taken in this inquiry was of benefit to CIT, even though it caused some internal angst. I trust that CIT has learned from that, although, in fairness to CIT, had additional financial support been forthcoming some of the problems it experienced may not have occurred. It was not CIT's fault that another RTO collapsed overnight and students were transferred to CIT, but I do think many mistakes were made in trying to meet the challenges caused by this collapse and consequent mistakes. Frankly, having the former minister run interference every time a question was asked on this did not help.

The estimates committee did not just focus on CIT's problems, and it would be quite wrong of me if I were not to also highlight some of the more positive activities that CIT is undertaking. In last year's appropriation debate there was a lot of discussion about the closure of Woden and the eventual relocation and establishment of a Tuggeranong campus. The delivery of the new CIT campus at Tuggeranong was a 2012 election promise, so its opening finally last week was a just-in-time moment—one that we have heard and seen by this government before, where election promises were sometimes announced three times and then finally delivered in a different election period.

I am told the transfer of courses, students and staff from Woden has been completed and relatively smoothly. I hope that is the case, because we received many complaints at the outset that no-one knew was what happening. Leanne Cover, CIT's relatively new CEO, told the committee that CIT, particularly at its Tuggeranong campus, was crossing over a little interschool-linked training, particularly in areas of health, community services, hospitality and ICT. This is an area that I believe will be of enormous value to students, particularly in the south of Canberra and, given the complexities of RTO registration, CIT can play a leadership role in this space.

I note that CIT is also growing its international student market and delivering national programs in collaboration with commonwealth public sector agencies and departments. I am encouraged that the new corporate structure outlined in 2014 looks to be working. As I have said many times, we need CIT to be a leader in vocational education in the ACT and beyond. We want it to work and to work well and profitably. There are opportunities for training here in the ACT that CIT could benefit from uniquely.

One area that was discussed in the estimates hearings was the courses CIT is offering in emerging technologies, including wind and solar power generation. In answer to a question taken on notice, the committee learned that funding agreements had been signed with companies in the renewable energy space and that CIT was currently offering three training modules for people who work or want to work in renewable wind technologies. The CIT Renewable Energy Skills Centre of Excellence has been established and the committee was advised that a comprehensive marketing strategy has been developed to promote the work it is doing and the courses it is offering. As the committee commented, the committee notes this involvement and endorses the CIT approach and programs.

It has also made a formal recommendation:

... that CIT continue to work with the renewable energy sector in assessing the workforce that will be required to meet the ACT Government's renewable energy target.

It also recommended:

... that the ACT Government continue to support the CIT Renewable Energy Skills Centre and expand funding and partnership agreements through engagement with the private sector.

Whether this budget has targeted funding streams appropriately for CIT, when it has allowed it to languish in the past, is a debatable point. Despite the government's best intentions to stifle cooperation between the two institutions, I am also encouraged by the increasing collaboration with the University of Canberra only a few years after its very hard battle with and against them for survival. I think that with the change at the top of both institutions in recent times there is a real opportunity for both to strengthen and grow and to seek out opportunities that benefit and expand their market reach. I hope this government does not manage to mangle this relationship and interfere as it has in other UC partnerships.

The Canberra Liberals want CIT to be a success story. We are doubtful it can be with so much attention and money being directed away from education and into projects simply to hang on to government. We know that CIT can do better and it will have an opportunity to do that under a Canberra Liberal government. As the Leader of the Opposition has stated on several occasions, we will not be supporting these appropriation bills. I think there are any number of examples we have provided as to why we are not supporting them.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo—Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services and Assistant Minister for Health) (12.03): I am very pleased to rise this morning to speak to the budget allocation for the Canberra Institute of Technology. I note, sadly, that the opposition appear not to be supporting the Canberra Institute of Technology and not supporting the passage of this budget today.

I will comment on some of Mr Doszpot's points. Although I note that he has spoken significantly and at length about the Canberra Institute of Technology over the course of this term, it was the tone of that discussion that was more notable. I would acknowledge you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as having spoken, I would say, more frequently and more in support of the Canberra Institute of Technology, over the course of this parliament.

As you know, the CIT is the ACT's largest provider of vocational education and training and our only public TAFE, enrolling more than 22,000 students each year and offering a wide variety of courses in the ACT. I am sure that, irrespective of whether you are a recent school leaver or someone looking to reskill or upskill, CIT will be able to help you with the skills you need to find employment or just to build on an existing knowledge and skills base.

CIT plays a very important role in this city. Beyond the benefits it provides to individual Canberrans, it has delivered great economic benefit to our city. It is vitally important for the diversification of Canberra's economy that we have a high-performing VET sector that allows our skilled community to contribute to the economic prosperity and social engagement of our city.

Ensuring that Canberrans have access to high quality skills development through a vocational qualification is a critical part of our economic development. Our highly skilled workforce is one of the advantages that Canberra has to offer and has allowed us to attract a wide variety of new industries.

A great example of this is the role CIT is playing in the development of renewable energy in the ACT, through, as Mr Doszpot said, the CIT Renewable Energy Skills Centre of Excellence. Through this centre, CIT is working with industry to ensure that we have qualified and skilled people to deliver on our clean energy future.

CIT is a key player in the VET sector and, not surprisingly, has a solid and well-deserved reputation in the Canberra community. In contrast to Mr Doszpot's comments, in 2015 student satisfaction at CIT was at a rate of 93 per cent and employer satisfaction at a rate of 87 per cent, and the graduate employment rate of 83.5 per cent compared to only 74.3 per cent nationally.

CIT is an institution that we can all take pride in, which is why the ACT government continues to support CIT by providing close to \$70 million annually for agreed outputs as detailed in the statement of intent and supported through the ACT government skills list.

To help CIT to continue to remain strong in an ever-changing world, the government introduced a new independent board for CIT. The board has been in place for just over 12 months now and is driving significant internal change as well as giving CIT the autonomy, flexibility and responsiveness to meet its challenges in more innovative and efficient ways.

I was pleased to recently join with the CIT board at the launch of *Strategic compass 2020: evolving together*, which articulates the board's strategic priorities and includes four elements that we would all agree to be fundamental in any plan to guide CIT as an organisation into the future. These four elements are shaping change by raising our ambitions to meet new expectations; growing our region's economy by adapting our offerings to provide skills for the future; advancing Canberra's workforce by contributing to the new economy and positioning for prosperity; and transforming our business by investing in our business for viability and value. Clearly the CIT strategic compass sets out what the CIT board considers are critical elements to CIT evolving with and within the Canberra community.

To help support this, I was pleased to recently also agree to the release of additional funds from the national partnership on skills reform to support CIT to deliver this strategic agenda and its reforms, including its reforms for campus modernisation.

Supporting the learning needs of our community is critical to CIT, and CIT's vision for campus modernisation is about exploring how to do this more effectively into the future to maximise resources for teaching and learning. Students remain central to the work and planning of CIT, and it is their needs which are at the heart of CIT's campus modernisation plans. CIT is committed to ensuring that their learning experience is the best that can be and best meets their needs.

There is a demand for a tertiary environment that can respond to the changing aspirations, life experience and social expectations of students. Students have become more independent, taking on responsibility for their own learning journey with a desire to be self-directing. Recognition of this in CIT's educational model will guide the future development of the CIT campus and its learning environments. To this end, CIT is looking to develop centres of excellence which will provide a contemporary experience for students and take advantage of the unique settings of each of its campuses.

The Bruce campus will become the centre of excellence in health and horticulture, having made significant investments in horticulture on that campus. The campus is located close to not only Calvary Hospital but the new University of Canberra public hospital, providing opportunity to CIT allied health, dentistry and nursing students in an evolving health precinct. Bruce campus is also home to the national centre for forensic science, which brings together expertise from CIT, the University of Canberra and the Australian Federal Police.

Reid will host the centre of excellence in professional services and hospitality. It is an ideal place given its location close to the heart of the CBD.

The Fyshwick campus will be a one-stop shop for anyone who is serious about a successful career in the trades as we consolidate all of the trade school activities onto one campus. Being side by side with Canberra's most important industrial hubs in Fyshwick and Hume will see our future electricians, plumbers and builders in Canberra begin their future with one foot already in the door.

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to join with you and the Chief Minister to officially open the new CIT at Tuggeranong, a contemporary, purpose-built educational facility designed for modern learners and offering a vibrant space to connect students, businesses and the local community in the heart of the Tuggeranong town centre. Not only is this campus a brand-new learning environment, but the highly specialised facilities and dynamic learning spaces set a new standard in the modern vocational educational experience in Canberra. As a major southern centre, the Tuggeranong town centre is home to a huge array of small and medium-sized businesses. As CIT's newest campus, it is natural for Tuggeranong to be the centre of excellence in innovative teaching and learning practices, catering for contemporary and evolving adult learning models.

CIT Tuggeranong is the first instalment of CIT's long-term vision to modernise all its campuses to provide contemporary learning opportunities, and facilitates and stands out as a fine example of how CIT is adapting its future offerings to meet new expectations and provide skills for students into the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I again acknowledge your work, your vision, your persistence and your commitment to developing a CIT campus in the heart of the Tuggeranong town centre. It is wonderful that it is now open, and we will see more and more students there each day as the CIT Tuggeranong campus really puts its stamp on the middle of the Tuggeranong town centre.

As members know, CIT remains central to the government's plans for vocational education and training and for our collective economic prosperity. It has a very strong record of delivering for our community and a strong plan for its future. The government will continue to support CIT to ensure its continued success. The government will continue to encourage CIT—as it has for many years—to collaborate with institutions across the city.

CIT has a long and proud history of collaboration. That is in contrast to Mr Doszpot's comments, which I will just speak briefly to. I accept that it is the role of the opposition to ask questions and to scrutinise, but the opposition should not miss the forest for the trees. There was a lost opportunity in the work of the education standing committee in looking at the broader vocational landscape in the ACT.

I would accept, as I think most people would, the word of the national regulator, ASQA, in its report on one program within CIT. While I accept that that should have been scrutinised, it was to the detriment of a broader inquiry into the VET sector here in the ACT and, sadly, a missed opportunity—and also a missed opportunity to rebalance the focus somewhat on all the incredible work that the CIT does, and not weigh down discussion of CIT, again reflecting Mr Doszpot's recent speech, by using

words like “mangle” and “interfere” in talking about the CIT and CIT’s contribution to the ACT VET sector.

The CIT has made an extraordinary contribution over a long period of time, meeting many students’ needs. Many students are highly satisfied with their experience at CIT and go on to contribute to our economy, get jobs, and build businesses in this city. Its reputation is longstanding and will only improve. I note that CIT increased its collaboration over the course of the last couple of years, recently joining the Canberra Innovation Network and being invited by the Chief Minister to join the Vice-Chancellors Forum, which it is now a member of, collaborating with all our higher educational institutions.

Again, I encourage the opposition and Mr Doszpot to look up and see the forest, to understand more broadly the VET sector in this territory and also the significant contribution of CIT. I thank members on this side for their support for this aspect of the budget and I commend the CIT budget to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Schedule 1, Part 1.5

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (12.15): I note at the outset that the Chief Minister’s directorate has become a bit of a behemoth. There is not much that is not in it. It has grown from 139 to an estimate of 2,431 next year. It is a bit reflective of what we have seen, I would say, from Mr Barr’s style of governing. It is certainly notable from his predecessor. I think that Ms Gallagher was more inclusive and ran a genuine cabinet process, but what we have seen under Mr Barr is a tightening of his control, the centralisation of government under his grip. There is now much in this directorate. With the expansion of the ministry, one would have expected the reverse to have occurred, as opposed to the centralisation as it is.

I spoke, under expenditure for the executive, about the direction for the city. I will not repeat much of what I have already said. I will just go to some of the touchstone issues that are being dealt with within this area.

One of those is city to the lake and the whole West Basin and what is going on there. I would put on the record that I think that this is a project that is causing significant concern. It appears to be less about enhancing our city and more about a cash grab to flog off as much land as you can as quickly as you can. If it is anything like the container village—Mr Barr’s dream of the pop-up container village—and if we see that being realised on a grand scale, we will all recoil in horror. That has not been a well thought out plan or process, and I think it is indicative of the sort of top-down control of this government in trying to create outcomes from above rather than allowing business in the community to genuinely come up with the innovative ideas the city needs.

We have made it very clear that if we form government in October we will put a pause on any plans for West Basin and we will have a collaborative inquiry—we will

invite the federal government to participate—to look at not just West Basin but the entirety of Lake Burley Griffin and its future. It is the jewel in the crown, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a special place. I have no doubt that there are enhancements that can be made on its foreshore and also in the utilisation of the lake that are important, but piecemeal selling off of land to pay for trams and other projects is not the way to go.

Another aspect that is worth noting at this point is the Chief Minister's signing of the memorandum of understanding with UnionsACT. That has been litigated extensively in this place. It is a document that is illustrative of this government being so beholden, as it is, to the CFMEU and a number of other unions that it is reflected in what we are seeing now: the advertising campaign, the scare campaign that is being run. There is no doubt that there is a very tight correlation between this government, the unions, gambling assets and money.

There is a flow, between particularly the CFMEU and the Labor Party, of money through gambling assets and MOUs being signed, television ads being run, donations being made, that others have described as a smell—and that it is. No doubt Mr Wall will have more to say about that issue in relation to either this line item or others.

A range of other issues within this portfolio area are of concern. There is what has happened with the Brumbies, again subject to extensive questioning in this place, with the Chief Minister signing a \$7.5 million waiver of a lease variation with the Brumbies. That matter is currently under investigation by the Australian Federal Police and is before the court.

Mr Barr: Not the signing of a waiver.

MR HANSON: The whole deal, the whole matter. The whole matter is interconnected. Mr Barr interjects, but the reality is that the property deal which involved a waiver of lease variation and consequential sale of that asset and the then move to the University of Canberra is being investigated following concerns that were raised.

There are other land deals that are also under scrutiny by people, including the Auditor-General. Mr Barr may wish to defend them, but there is a process in place, and others in the community are not taking this so lightly. Again, it has gone to the smell around this government. These are not my words; these are words being used by many in the community to describe this government—in the *Canberra Times*, in the *CityNews* and by members of our business community.

Let me turn to issues within Treasury. At the outset it is worth putting on record the failure in the management of this budget by this Treasurer. Mr Barr is famous now for promising surpluses that never appear. They are illusionary. Every year he promises a surplus; then, when the time comes, he delivers a deficit. The promise is always just beyond the outyears. Again this year we have seen the promise of a surplus. We know that if this government remains we will never see a surplus under Mr Barr. We just need to look at his track record. We just need to look at his history and his desire to spend enormous sums of money on light rail.

This fantasy has been exposed by Dr Khalid Ahmed. I remember when Dr Ahmed would appear before the estimates committee. He was a director in Treasury, a very senior official. There would be few with greater experience, knowledge and expertise in the ACT budget than Dr Ahmed. He has made a stinging criticism of Mr Barr's budget management. I will quote from the *Canberra Times* of 26 July:

Dr Ahmed said the recovery in the forward years, a return to surplus in 2018-19, was even more “miraculous and unbelievable” than this year's figure.

“Unbelievable” is what the experts are saying, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not think there is anybody out there now, once they have been fooled once or twice, or three times or four times, by Mr Barr with his promises, who does not get disappointed. Then he promises it again and they get disappointed. I do not think there is anybody else left in this community—probably not even members of his cabinet, I would imagine, although they are, I suppose, duty bound to stand up and back him. The reality is that there is probably no-one outside that tight little group in cabinet that is anything other than entirely sceptical of promises of surplus made by somebody who can deliver only deficits and has been told by Dr Ahmed, experts in Treasury, his own former staff, that the promises are miraculous and unbelievable.

Management of the budget is important, but it has to be balanced with delivering services. I will make it very clear that we will address the issues in the budget but will not do so by cutting jobs—as is the lie that we have seen. Again, what I would say is that it has been debunked. It has been debunked again, and what we have seen—

Members interjecting—

MR HANSON: This is a government that has cut jobs. Mr Barr interjects. (*Second speaking period taken.*) We will be hiring. Mr Barr does not like it, but he is the person, while he is Chief Minister, who cuts jobs in policing—front-line police. He cut policing.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR HANSON: Mr Barr wants to know if I will restore funding to police. He wants me to say it on the record. “Yes” is the answer. Unashamedly yes, Madam Deputy Speaker; I will support our front-line police. Yes, I am saying it for *Hansard*. Mr Barr is concerned that I am saying it on the record. I unashamedly will say on the record that we will restore funding to our police that was cut by Mr Barr, and I will say it repeatedly right up to the election. If I am elected as the Chief Minister, I will make sure that our police have the resources that they need to go out onto the front line to provide safety and security to our community. Yes, yes, yes, Mr Barr. You want me to say it repeatedly; I will say it.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the chair, please.

MR HANSON: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, through the chair. Mr Barr interjected, wanting me to say it on the record, so I just thought I would. The problem is this: the

front page of the *Canberra Times* said today, “Flawed analysis used in Labor’s jobs attack on Liberals”. Flawed analysis; we are going to expect this. We know that there is going to be the scare campaign from Mr Barr, who on the one hand cuts jobs in policing and on the other hand tries to sling mud. Economics professor Phil Lewis from the Labour Market Research Centre was quoted. He said that it was “definitely wrong and flawed”. He said “they would create jobs”. Let me quote from the *Canberra Times*. He said that “they would create jobs”.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR HANSON: Mr Barr likes to talk about black holes. There is a massive black hole. Let me tell you what it is. It is \$1.78 billion—\$1.78 billion that we are seeing from those opposite, with plans for more. If that is not economically reckless, I do not know what is.

We have heard lots of interjecting from Mr Barr. He is a bit sensitive, Madam Deputy Speaker. He has been criticised by Dr Khalid Ahmed, who said that Mr Barr’s budget surplus is miraculous and unbelievable. Mr Barr is a bit sensitive about that. He has been criticised by others who said that there is a smell around this government. He does not like it when people are saying there is a smell around the government. There are people coming out, economics professors, saying that his attack, his scare campaign, was flawed and that our approach would actually create jobs.

He is a bit sensitive today, a bit bruised. We have to be concerned about that, members. When you are speaking, remember that this is a Chief Minister that really has nobody in this community—not the clubs, not many in the media and not many people out in the community that will speak to back him. The only people who, it seems, are now backing Mr Barr are some of his cronies from the Labor Party—we know that—and the CFMEU. They are staunch. They are still staunch. We know that they are out there running ads on behalf of Mr Barr, probably funded by pokie money that is coming in from the Tradies or elsewhere.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MR HANSON: Mr Barr interjects. I welcome his interjections, but he is a bit sensitive.

As much as we have our debates in this place and there are disputes, the grim reality is playing out there in the suburbs. As I said before, Mrs Jones, Mr Wall and Ms Lawder are out there all the time at the shopping centres, doorknocking and talking to people in the community. We know that the bad decisions of this government, their inability to manage the government and Mr Barr’s tax changes are hurting people. They are hurting real people. They are hurting retirees, families, singles. There are many singles, whatever age they are, living in units across this town whose rates are going up another 20 per cent. We have seen car rego going through the roof. We have seen parking prices going through the roof. We have seen household rates going up at about 10 per cent. Unit rates, members, have gone up 20 per cent—20 per cent in a single year. Commercial rates have gone up another 10 per cent and land tax about 11 per cent.

It makes me reflect on the extraordinary moment that we had in estimates last year when the opposition questioned Mr Barr about the impact of late night parking in Civic. What does this mean? What does this mean for low paid retail workers, hospitality workers, families and people for whom parking is a significant portion of their take-home pay? What did Mr Barr say? That it was the difference between sparkling and still water when you are having a \$100 dinner. This is the bloke that cannot deliver a surplus. This is the bloke that thinks that this is all about sparkling and still water when you are having a \$100 dinner. This is a bloke that loves his tax reform that is hurting Canberra families and retirees across this town. And this is the bloke that is running a baseless scare campaign that has been debunked by experts.

Not only will we not support this element in the budget; you simply cannot believe it.

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 12.31 to 2.30 pm.

**Questions without notice
Government—deputy leadership**

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister. Who will Mr Corbell's successor be in the leadership?

MR BARR: What was the final part of your question? Who will Mr Corbell's successor be—

MR HANSON: In the leadership position, as in deputy leader.

Mr Coe interjecting—

Mr Corbell: Not in the Labor Party. He has no ministerial responsibility.

Mr Hanson: He appointed you as Deputy Chief Minister.

Mr Corbell: No, he didn't. You said "deputy leader".

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! Mr Barr has the floor, Mr Corbell.

MR BARR: Following the Assembly election, the Labor caucus will meet and elect a deputy leader.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, why won't ACT electors be given the respect of knowing who is going to be proposed as Deputy Chief Minister in any future Labor government?

MR BARR: The team that we take forward to the election is a formidable team who will do exceptionally well. Amongst that team, in the large number of Labor members who will be elected, caucus will then meet and elect a deputy leader.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what factional arrangements will dictate who is elected as your deputy?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear the answer to the question, Mrs Jones.

MR BARR: I am reminded of the Prime Minister's appearance before a New South Wales Liberal Party event where he said, "Oh, we have no factions in the Liberal Party," and the entire room descended into chaos.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: I had seen that footage before, actually. But thank you for raising that, Mr Coe, because it certainly does highlight the deep, deep divisions within the Liberal Party in this place and it definitely demonstrates that the far right are on the march. One need only look at the statements that were made by Eric Abetz on behalf of the former Prime Minister.

Mr Hanson: Point of order on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order. Sit down, please, Mr Barr. Stop the clock, please.

Mr Hanson: The question was about who would possibly be Deputy Chief Minister and what factional arrangements would dictate this in the Labor Party. I ask Comrade Barr to answer the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: First of all, Mr Hanson, I know that this is cut and thrust and we are getting to the silly season of elections but you will address Mr Barr as "Chief Minister", "Mr Barr" or "member for Molonglo" and not use any other epithet. Do you have a point to make on the point of order, Mr Corbell?

Mr Corbell: Yes. On a further point of order, question time allows members to ask ministers about matters relating to their portfolio responsibilities under the administrative arrangements. I do not think that a question to Mr Barr about the internal goings on in the Labor Party is any way falling within the administrative responsibilities of the relevant portfolio minister.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, on the point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: On the point of order.

Mr Hanson: In answering the question, Mr Barr started talking about factional relationships within the Liberal Party. He has in his answer talked about party political factions. Therefore it becomes directly relevant to talk about factions within the Labor Party.

MADAM SPEAKER: Going back to Mr Corbell's point of order, which is a separate one from Mr Hanson's, the fact that we are into the third question in a series of four questions: if you had chosen to raise that matter at the outset, I might have considered it, but we are now three questions into a four-part question on the subject. The question was relating to the Chief Minister's responsibilities in relation to appointing a deputy and was about arrangements within his party, which is probably a bit marginal at this stage. I would ask him, in accordance with the standing orders, on Mr Hanson's point of order, to be directly relevant to the question. Mr Barr.

MR BARR: On the topic of factions, which was—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: Which was part of the question—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: from those opposite: I can state categorically that the Deputy Chief Minister will not be Mr Coe.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what influence will powerbrokers of both the union movement and the Labor Party, such as Dean Hall, have in determining who Labor's next deputy will be?

MR BARR: As I indicated in my answers to the previous questions, following the election the Labor caucus will meet and elect people to various positions, including that of the deputy leadership of the party.

Bushfires—warnings

MR JEFFERY: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In January 2003 I saw that the bushfires were a serious threat to the people of Tharwa and district and I warned them. The cabinet was twice warned of the threat from the bushfires, once on 13 January 2003 and again on 16 January 2003. Yet the government failed to warn the people of suburban Canberra. Why did the government fail to warn the people of the imminent threat of bushfires in 2003 and why should the people of Canberra have any confidence that the government would do a better job in similar circumstances?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Jeffery for the question. The matters he raised have been thoroughly and comprehensively reviewed through a series of independent inquiries and reports, and I refer him to those matters and the outcomes of them. What I would also say, though, is that Canberrans can have every confidence in the capacity of our emergency services to respond in a very effective way should we see similar circumstances to those that surrounded the commencement of the 2003 fires. That was, of course, a lightning strike in the Brindabella ranges in Namadgi national park or adjacent areas in New South Wales.

I would point Mr Jeffery directly to the response that the authorities demonstrated in relation to the fire that was started by a lightning strike in Namadgi national park last summer: exactly the same set of circumstances, a dry lightning storm starting a fire, inside Namadgi national park in a very remote area. We had a very short period of time to tackle that fire before weather conditions deteriorated significantly.

I can advise members that the response from the emergency services was as it should be, and that was a very heavily weighted response that involved bulldozers, that involved aerial attack using aerial appliances and that involved the deployment of remote area firefighting teams winched into the scene as well as ground crews with vehicles, even though that was limited because of the terrain in which the fire commenced. That fire was contained and extinguished in short order. That is at it should be.

It demonstrates that our emergency services have the right tactics, the right equipment and the right capability to respond to fires such as those that led to the tragedy of 2003.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Jeffery.

MR JEFFERY: Mr Corbell, why has the government abandoned the recommendation of the McLeod inquiry to establish an independent emergency services authority as a statutory authority?

MR CORBELL: The government has ensured that there is complete statutory independence for our emergency services when it comes to their operational decision-making and roles. We have four independent chief officers who have clear and untrammelled legal capacity in their legislation to ensure that they and the services they lead can do the job they need to do to respond to an emergency.

That is the critical issue. We are not interested in creating a bureaucracy for the sake of it. We are interested, however, in making sure that our emergency services have full legal independence when it comes to their occupational capacity and that is exactly what they have.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, why did the government fail to warn residents of Uriarra forest in 2003 until the morning of 18 January? What arrangements are in place to better protect residents of rural villages?

MR CORBELL: I refer Mrs Jones to my earlier answer to Mr Jeffery in relation to the first part of her question. In relation to the second part of her question, we have a very strong level of coordination when it comes to residents of rural villages such as Uriarra. First of all, we have invested significantly in the capability of those villages. For example, we have the very successful community fire unit program in place at Uriarra Village.

Equally, the planning of the new Uriarra Village has involved the development of very significant planning controls and land management controls in relation to fire abatement around the village. I would be very happy to provide a briefing to Mrs Jones that deals with those matters—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mrs Jones!

MR CORBELL: because the development of good land management practice around Uriarra Village is critically important in protecting that village against fire attack.

Finally, we have strengthened the relationship between the rural village and the relevant parts of our emergency services, for example, the Rural Fire Service brigade responsible for that part of the territory. Those communication arrangements are maintained and they are strengthened to ensure that they are operational in the lead up to each and every summer to make sure that residents of Uriarra Village, as is the case with residents in any other bushfire prone part of the territory, are able to be well informed and understand what needs to be done.

It is worth highlighting the specific attempts that the ESA have undertaken through the Canberra bushfire ready campaign. Canberra bushfire ready is about reaching out to residents in bushfire prone areas to give them information and advice on the steps they need to take to be safe.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what kind of abatement zones are in place for the suburbs currently being built at Denman Prospect for fire safety, and why has the government abandoned the use of bushfire abatement zones for the fighting of fires by suburban fire and rescue services, as has been the case since the recommendations of the McLeod report? Why have my two written requests for a briefing on the ESA not been responded to in the last few weeks?

MR CORBELL: They have been, and my officers indicated to Mrs Jones that we will provide her with a briefing after this sitting fortnight. Those arrangements are underway, and she knows that.

The government has not abandoned the use of bushfire abatement zones when it comes to land use planning and bushfire abatement planning—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mrs Jones! You have asked your question.

MR CORBELL: The bushfire abatement zones are not for operational response. That is not their purpose or function.

Mrs Jones: On a point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Mrs Jones: In my question, and it goes to relevance, I asked why the bushfire abatement zones are no longer allowed to be used for fighting backfires. I did not ask why they were still involved in the planning process, but why they were not being allowed to be used in fighting backfires, because there has been a change, apparently. That was the point that I asked about and that I was hoping Minister Corbell would answer.

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Corbell! This is not a conversation across the chamber.

Mr Corbell interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Do not answer me back, Mr Corbell. Mrs Jones asked a question about the bushfire abatement zones in relation to bushfire fighting. They are the notes that I made here when she asked the question.

MR CORBELL: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Corbell. I will call you in a moment. I will uphold the point of order that you need to be directly relevant to her question in relation to that.

MR CORBELL: On the point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Mr Corbell.

MR CORBELL: I would invite you, Madam Speaker, to review the transcript of my answer in the immediate moments before Mrs Jones took a point of order, because I said very clearly that we have not abandoned the use of bushfire abatement zones, and I said further that the use of bushfire abatement zones is not for operational response. Tell me in what part of my answer, Madam Speaker, am I not being relevant to Mrs Jones's question?

Mrs Jones: On the point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: It is all right, Mrs Jones. I will stand to be corrected, but the last thing I heard you say, Mr Corbell, was that the bushfire abatement zones had not been abandoned in relation to planning. Mrs Jones had asked you about bushfire fighting. I would ask you to address the question of the use of bushfire abatement zones in relation to bushfire fighting in accordance with the standing orders.

MR CORBELL: I am sorry, could you repeat the last part of your ruling, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER: In accordance with the standing order, to be directly relevant and address the issue of Mrs Jones's question.

MR CORBELL: Madam Speaker, I was being directly relevant, and I will continue to be so. The fact is that bushfire abatement zones are not in place for operational response and nor have they ever been. There are other arrangements that determine operational response. Those matters are determined through the relevant arrangements coordinated between the two fire services and the overarching rule that the nearest and most appropriate appliance is the appliance that has responded to a fire.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MR CORBELL: I beg your pardon?

MADAM SPEAKER: Do not have a conversation across the chamber; answer the question.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, I warn you!

MR CORBELL: The government's policy and the ESA standing provisions are very clear. The nearest and most appropriate appliance that is on duty is the appliance or the vehicle that has responded to a fire. This is the whole point about bushfire response. It is not about which service deals with it; it is about whether or not the fire is put out and who can do that the quickest and who can do that in the safest and most effective manner. So it does not matter whether it is a Fire and Rescue vehicle or an RFS vehicle.

If they are the nearest and most appropriate vehicle, they are the vehicle that has responded to the fire, and that is how it should be.

Planning—Braddon

MR COE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, why did the Labor clubs get away with not paying a change of use charge for their site in Braddon?

MR BARR: I have got to say the irony of being asked a question from the Canberra Liberals about the lease variation charge is not lost on me. In the instance you refer to, it would appear that the before and after valuations were the same.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Treasurer, has the Labor Party or the Labor Club gained from or exploited the system in order to get around paying change of use charges?

MR BARR: No. Those opposite know best how to do that. They have made a policy to support the private sector developers to achieve just that outcome. So you would know more about that than we would.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, what is the amount of forgone revenue that the government has lost due to the Labor Club basing their change of use charge on fewer apartments than are actually going to be built?

MR BARR: None.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Treasurer, can you explain the process of how proponents for lease variation are treated in a fair and equitable manner?

MR BARR: It certainly does highlight the hypocrisy of those opposite in relation to the lease variation charge—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: that those opposite will wilfully benefit a small number of their developer mates by giving a windfall gain, an unearned windfall gain, by changing the policy framework to not even collect the tax—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: In this instance the law was applied as it is intended. We are not seeking to change the law, unlike those opposite, whose morals are in the alley when it comes to these issues.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr, this is a political chamber and there is a place for political debate but you will not make references to people's morals or otherwise. That is a reflection on their character, whether you do it to one person or to the group. So withdraw.

MR BARR: I withdraw, Madam Speaker. I would note—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Barr on the question of explaining the process of how change of use charge is administered freely and fairly.

MR BARR: I would note that there have been a number of assertions of exactly the same kind made by the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow treasurer that will not go unchallenged and that they have made similar aspersions on the integrity of those on this side of the chamber on repeated occasions. So the same standards that you have just applied to me will also be applied—

MADAM SPEAKER: Answer the question directly, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: to those opposite. That is exactly how—

MADAM SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: this place should work.

Budget—employment

MR HINDER: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what did the 2016-17 budget identify as the most important drivers of job growth in the ACT economy over the next decade?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Hinder for the question. It is very pleasing to be able to report that employment growth in the territory was 1.5 per cent in the 2015-16 year—3,100 new jobs created over the past 12 months—and our unemployment rate has fallen and now stands at 3.6 per cent, which is the lowest in the country.

New jobs are being created in areas of service exports growth. We have seen our service exports increase by 16.2 per cent in 2015, the fastest growth rate of service exports of any jurisdiction in Australia. Our service exports now contribute \$1.6 billion to the territory economy. This outstanding result was driven by growth in international education exports of 10 per cent in 2015, bringing their total value to \$451 million. International tourism exports also grew in 2015, increasing by 5.1 per cent to reach \$208 million. Technical, trade-related and other business services such as engineering services also grew strongly. The export of these services increased by a massive 35 per cent in 2015 to \$165 million.

The government's business development strategy, confident and business ready, has been guiding our efforts to see these jobs continue to grow. That is why I am confident that we will see jobs growth in the future in industry sectors like renewable energy, higher education and research, ICT and e-government, health, sports science, tourism, defence and cyber security. It is growth in these sectors that will provide opportunities for Canberrans to find good jobs into the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: Chief Minister, what is the ACT government doing to support that growth?

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry; could you repeat that, Mr Hinder, because I did not hear what you said.

MR HINDER: Certainly, Madam Speaker: Chief Minister, what is it that the ACT government is doing to support that growth?

MR BARR: We continue to support jobs growth in areas where our economy has a competitive advantage. In renewable energy, we have committed to powering the ACT on 100 per cent renewable energy by 2020. This is attracting providers from around the country and around the world and creating new jobs in our city. We are driving the growth of higher education, research and skills. We have supported the University of Canberra to compete with the world's best. We have opened a new CIT campus in Tuggeranong.

Our partnership with Data61 gives us a strategic advantage through an innovation ecosystem for ICT and e-government. We are supporting the local cyber-security sector as a unique national capability here in Canberra. The Canberra innovation network is already generating spin-offs and new start-ups in the incubation stage. Our local industry advocate has been working hard to ensure that local businesses make the most of the opportunity for federal government procurement, the federal government being the biggest single purchaser of goods and services in this country, particularly in the defence area. We have recently become members of the medical research commercialisation fund, investing over half a million dollars into the territory's research sector. We are bringing the higher education and health sectors together by building a new teaching hospital at the University of Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: How will international flights impact on that growth?

MR BARR: Research by Independent Economics shows that daily services between Singapore and Canberra will generate an additional 690 full-time jobs. We are already seeing the benefits of strengthened ties with our new sister city, Wellington, as our local businesses are now well placed to develop new connections through the Canberra and Wellington business chambers.

International flights are a game changer and they support the growth of some of our most important industries. Our businesses and research institutions will benefit from stronger international connections. New freight opportunities open up not just for Canberra but the broader region and that will benefit businesses and consumers alike.

We will take advantage of this new opportunity through the establishment of the Commissioner for International Engagement. The commissioner will focus our efforts and help make sure that our businesses can take full advantage of the opportunities that these new direct flights will offer.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Treasurer, how can the ACT government make sure that Canberra can attract and retain the talent that we need to turbo-charge this growth you have spoken of?

MR BARR: Ultimately, our success as a city is based on the success of our people. If we cannot attract and retain talent then we will not remain the world's best city to live in. Strong employment growth in a diverse economy gives Canberrans a sustainable economic future and long-term prospects. It will also help us in attracting people from around Australia and around the world to live in Canberra.

Our world-class livability is our most important competitive advantage and we will continue to work hard to ensure that Canberra remains the world's most livable city. We need to shape the growth of our city to connect people to jobs and we need to make sure that we continue to build on what is great about our city and make it even better in the future.

We need to invest in public transport so that we never become a congested mess like our east coast neighbours. That is exactly the policy framework that my government is delivering for the city: attracting and retaining people, growing the economy and avoiding the congestion of Sydney.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—staffing

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Chief Minister as minister responsible for Access Canberra. In October 2015 Greg Jones was replaced as gaming and racing commissioner by the chief operating officer of Access Canberra. Staffing at the Gambling and Racing Commission has fallen by 28 per cent since June 2015. Chief Minister, why has staffing at the Gambling and Racing Commission fallen by 28 per cent since June last year?

MR BARR: A number of responsibilities for the commission, the work that is undertaken, have been restructured as part of the establishment of Access Canberra. Significant red tape reduction measures have been passed by this place and Access Canberra continues to provide high quality regulatory services.

But the whole point of the exercise, both red tape reduction and the administrative changes within Access Canberra, was to focus our regulatory efforts on the highest risk areas and to reduce red tape where it was not needed. So where we do not need inspectors in certain areas—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: we have been able to move them into other areas of higher need, particularly focusing on streamlining approval processes, making it easier to navigate

through regulatory frameworks. That is the whole point of the exercise: simpler, faster and more effective regulation, ensuring that customer needs are put first. This is not about the inputs. It is about the outcomes and that is exactly what we are focusing on.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, why is the gaming and racing commission now reporting to you rather than the minister for gaming and racing?

MR BARR: There are two functions associated with this work: the regulatory side, which is consolidated within Access Canberra, which even Ms Lawder should be able to understand; and then the policy framework, which sits with the Minister for Racing and Gaming. We have been through this. I have been asked this question in this place by other members, and Ms Lawder has sat through numerous committee hearings where these issues have been discussed. This is hardly a new issue or a new question. Regulatory functions and policy functions have been split in the creation of Access Canberra to consolidate all regulatory functions in one agency.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, have you discussed changes to the Gambling and Racing Commission in any of the various meetings that you have held with Aquis?

MR BARR: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Are you confident that the Gambling and Racing Commission can meet all the government's responsibilities with significantly fewer staff?

MR BARR: Yes.

Gaming—poker machines

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Racing and Gaming. Minister, will you rule out allowing poker machines in the casino?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. As you know, Madam Speaker, the government is going through a process now with a request from the casino to have poker machines at that establishment. The government has responded to that request and said that they would be allowed to have a number of poker machines in that establishment as long as they purchase from the clubs. The government supports the community gaming model which says that we want to reduce poker machines overall in the territory. This would be a reduction in poker machines overall if it were to go ahead.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will you rule out allowing the Tradies to directly or indirectly transfer machines to the casino for a profit?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Doszpot for the supplementary. The trading scheme is in place. It will be up to the clubs and the recipients of such machines through that process. There is no process for me to rule in and out. It is a matter to be established under the trading scheme and it is a well-established practice.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, are you aware of any plans for the Tradies to make a profit from the sale or transfer of their poker machines?

MR GENTLEMAN: No.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, will the government make the details of the transfer public and what negotiations or deals have already taken place?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have not been given any information on deals or negotiations for this transfer, if it goes forward. As I said, it would go forward under the trading schemes in place. That will be reported in due course should such trading opportunity or occurrence happen.

Government—office supplies policy

MR WALL: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, a number of small businesses that currently supply office products, including stationery and cleaning supplies, across government have been informally advised by the directorates that they work with that a directive has been issued to all government directorates that the preferred supplier to use across government agencies and directorates is OfficeMax. OfficeMax is also listed as one of the 579 major corporations that paid no income tax in the 2013-14 financial year in Australia. Chief Minister why has your government chosen this multinational company as a supplier to the ACT government over many locally owned and operated businesses?

MR BARR: They would have won a competitive tendering process.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Why then are local small businesses that have also participated successfully in the competitive tender process being locked out and are you aware that locally owned businesses, should this decision continue, will be forced to close their doors as a result of this change?

MR BARR: The decisions around procurement are not taken by ministers.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why has your government failed to factor in the social and financial impact on local suppliers that the decision to use OfficeMax will have, namely, job losses and business closures?

MR BARR: Our procurement process allows for those issues to be assessed and there are weighted criteria. Local small businesses are given a positive weighting in their favour. What Ms Lawder is suggesting is corruption of a procurement process for a minister to intervene in this context. I will not have any part of that.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how many local workers will be impacted by the closure of local businesses that are capable of carrying out this work?

MR BARR: None that I am aware of.

Government—election costings

MRS JONES: My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. An article in today's *Canberra Times* reports that significant flaws have been discovered in the so-called costings of Liberal Party policies put out by the government. Professor Lewis of the University of Canberra said that your analysis was "definitely wrong and flawed". Minister, why did you issue an economic analysis that was wrong and flawed?

MR BARR: I did not. I think it is interesting to note that when the professor was interviewed on radio this morning he concurred absolutely with the \$400 million black hole. He said, "Yes, I think that's probably around the right figure." "Yes, take that as read," he said, when asked, "Is there a \$400 million black hole?" "Yes, take that as read". "Is the \$400 million figure correct?" "I think that is probably around the right figure." A \$400 million black hole confirmed by the professor.

Mrs Jones: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: It goes to relevance. The question was not about the 400 figure. The question was about why the economic analysis that was wrong and flawed was put out.

Government members interjecting—

MRS JONES: Well, apparently it was.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you read your original question, Mrs Jones? Stop the clock, please.

MRS JONES: Yes. An article in today's *Canberra Times* reports that significant flaws have been discovered in the so-called costings of Liberal Party policies. Professor Lewis of the University of Canberra said that the analysis was "definitely wrong and flawed". Why did you issue an economic analysis that was wrong and flawed?

MADAM SPEAKER: On the subject that the question was about—why did you issue an economic analysis—can you be directly relevant to the question, please, Mr Barr?

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, we analysed, conservatively, the commitments that have been made. The professor has agreed about our \$400 million assessment: "I think that's probably around the right figure". When asked again by the interviewer, he said, "Yes, take that as read," around the \$400 million figure. As to the assumptions that the government has made, we have assumed that in trying to fill the \$400 million hole, those opposite would seek to fill half of that hole—only half of that hole—with job cuts.

But we do know the form of the Liberal Party on these questions. One need only look at Tony Abbott, the former Prime Minister, just before the last election when he said there would be no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no cuts to pensions, no cuts to the ABC and no cuts to SBS. What happened in his first budget? He cut health, he cut education, he cut pensions, he cut the ABC and he cut SBS. They have form.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what involvement did Treasury have in preparing your announcement?

MR BARR: None. We stand by the \$400 million black hole that has been confirmed by Professor Lewis this morning. He absolutely confirmed a \$400 million black hole in the Liberal Party's fiscal position before the campaign has even begun, before the spend-o-metre starts ticking over furiously from those opposite, and we are going to see this in the next nine weeks. They are going to continue to spend money they do not have. They are going to continue to argue that they can simultaneously cut taxes, raise spending and reduce the budget deficit.

We have heard this before. This is exactly what Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey said prior to the 2013 election. They mumbled something about growth. They mumbled something about business as usual and then, when they got in, they did exactly what every other Liberal government has done in this country in this decade, be it in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory or indeed federally, because it is in their DNA.

They sack people. They cut jobs in the public sector. It is why they are in politics, to have a smaller public sector. That is your core philosophical belief, smaller government, and you are going to create a smaller government if you are elected. A smaller government means fewer people employed, fewer services for Canberrans and a worse Canberra into the future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Treasurer, what role does the Treasury play in informing ministers' offices about the costings of Liberal Party policies?

MR BARR: The Treasury has no role in costing Liberal Party policies, but the Treasury can be asked to cost policies.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Will you rule out using the Treasury or other agencies, or public servants, to cost Liberal Party promises between now and caretaker and after caretaker?

MR BARR: The government is subject to the provisions of the caretaker guidelines and the election commitments costings legislation. But I do remind members that at any time the government of the day can seek a costing on a policy. I repeat: at any time the government can seek a costing on a policy.

Budget—health funding

MS BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Health.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I want to hear Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Minister for Health, can you please provide the Assembly with an overview of the initiatives that have been included in the recent budget and also provide an update on how some of those initiatives included in the 2015-16 year's budget are making a difference for our Canberran community.

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Burch for the question. Yes, I am delighted to outline the very significant commitments this government is making in better health care for our community, because it puts the lie to the claims of those opposite that we never invest in better services for the community. In fact, this government is making hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars worth of investment in better health services for our community, and we have done so in each and every budget—each and every budget since we have been elected—and continue to do so in the most recent budget.

We hear from those opposite that people want to know where their rates are going. Let us make clear that their rates are going towards a record \$1.6 billion spend in health services over the next four years, which includes another \$237 million of new spending in new services such as expanding existing health service capacity; investing in better mental health; upgrading, maintaining and building more and better health infrastructure; and boosting our front-line resources by employing more nurses, more doctors and more allied health professionals. That is where people's rates are going. That is where the investment is happening.

Let us be very clear. In the most recent budget, in the budget we are debating this week, the government is spending over \$139 million to employ a further 170 new health staff. Whilst those opposite are clearly embarked on an agenda of wanting to cut jobs in the ACT public service, we are investing in more doctors, more nurses and more allied health staff. Twenty-two more doctors will be employed as a result of this year's budget. Another 91 nurses—91 nurses—will be employed as a result of this budget. There will be another 34 allied health professionals.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MR CORBELL: At the same time, we are spending over \$100 million on better health infrastructure and more health services. Of course, we are also spending over \$200 million to develop the new University of Canberra public hospital.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, come to order.

MR CORBELL: Madam Speaker, let me drill down into some of the detail around the better services and better infrastructure that this government is investing in. There is \$5.3 million to expand the trauma service at the Canberra Hospital. This will provide better care for trauma patients. If you or your family are injured in an accident on the roads—it might even be interstate—this service will provide you with a better level of care. We know that the Canberra Hospital is, of course, the designated major trauma centre for the ACT and the surrounding region of New South Wales. This additional capacity will allow us to better coordinate that trauma care. It will employ additional medical specialists who are expert in trauma care to coordinate the different doctors and nurses that are needed to deal with trauma to different parts of a person's body.

At the same time, we are spending over \$5.3 million for two additional special care nursery beds and eight additional staff at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. This is designed to make sure that we see a reduction in the neonatal intensive care unit occupancy rates, with people not having to stay for so long; a decrease in the need to transfer people interstate, particularly for babies in utero, due to improved access to the neonatal intensive care unit beds; and, further, a decrease in the need to rely on nursing staff overtime by providing for greater capacity. (*Time expired.*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Ms Burch.

MS BURCH: Minister, can you inform the Assembly of what specific mental health initiatives were included in the 2016-17 budget?

MR CORBELL: I thank Ms Burch for her supplementary. Providing better mental health services is a particular priority for the government. We are providing an additional \$50 million in new funding for better mental health care in our community. Once again, this is another great example, in rebuttal of those opposite, for when

people ask, “Where are our rates being spent?” There is an amount of \$50 million over four years for better and more tailored health services.

This will include 60 new health staff at the new secure mental health unit, which will open this financial year. We will also provide \$3 million to establish a young people’s mental health treatment team for young Canberrans experiencing, or at high risk of developing, a serious mental illness. I know that this is a matter of interest to members on both sides of the chamber. It is very important that we invest more in the capability of our mental health services to meet new and emerging mental health concerns amongst young people in our community.

We will also provide \$500,000 to boost community mental health services and suicide prevention services provided in the non-government sector. These are all great examples of the investment this government is making in better mental health services for our city.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: Minister, can you please outline to the Assembly how the government is improving access to timely care in the ED and what investments the government has made in the ED as part of the 2016-17 budget?

MR CORBELL: I thank Mr Hinder for his supplementary. As I have said before in this place, providing better access, more timely access, to care, particularly in the emergency department and when it comes to elective surgery, has been one of my priorities as health minister over the past couple of years. I am pleased to say that we continue to see very positive results. This is partly due to an increase in capacity, an increase in resources, in the emergency department.

We will invest, as a Labor government, \$29 million over the next four years to increase the treatment capacity and the number of staff in the Canberra Hospital emergency department. That will see 39 additional staff in 2016-17, rising to a total of 54 additional staff in 2019-20. This will include 24 additional ED nurses, 10 new allied health workers and one new administrative position for the ED. This is particularly important as we expand the overall capacity of our emergency department.

We are of course also very focused on improving processes and timeliness inside the ED so that more people get the care they need within the national time frames. As part of this, I am pleased to say that we have seen significant improvements. The average wait time in the Canberra Hospital emergency department improved by 14 per cent between 1 March and 27 June this year and the average treatment time dropped by 34 minutes. That is at a time when the average daily presentation rate continues to grow.

Now, with a significant expansion of the ED well and truly underway that will increase the number of beds in the ED by over 30 per cent. With the extra doctors, nurses and allied health staff that we are employing and with the reform agenda that is underway, I am confident we will continue to see better improvements. *(Time expired.)*

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hinder.

MR HINDER: Minister, can you update the Assembly on the expanded stroke service care that was funded in the most recent budget?

MR CORBELL: I am very pleased to talk about the expansion to better stroke care. Stroke, as members would know, is actually one of the three largest causes of death and the leading cause of disability amongst the Australian population. It can be a catastrophic event for far too many individuals and families in our community. That is why the government is investing \$5 million to improve stroke care here in Canberra and, in particular, to provide more people with the opportunity to rehabilitate after experiencing a stroke.

What this will involve is a new clot breakdown treatment and earlier intervention for stroke sufferers. This will mean that across the day, over the 24-hour period, there is greater capacity for four more specialised clinical staff to carry out faster assessments of people's strokes and then undertake clot retrieval activity using interventional radiology services at the Canberra Hospital.

What this means is that more people can see the impact of their stroke reversed. We know that early intervention and clot retrieval and removal can make a real difference and see many people make a full recovery, or a much better recovery than they would otherwise have. This is a much-needed enhancement of acute stroke services in the territory.

We are one of the first jurisdictions nationally to be investing in this service. What it means is that more Canberrans who suffer a stroke will be able to get access to the earlier intervention clot retrieval and removal technology that is needed so that they can rehabilitate and have a better quality of life. (*Time expired.*)

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 47

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo), by leave: Earlier today the Standing Committee on JACS tabled scrutiny report 47. As was noted during this morning's discussion, there was a robust exchange between me and the committee. I feel comfortable having a robust conversation with the committee because I respect the work of the committee and I feel it is a very important forum to test concepts and content in legislation. The scrutiny committee is an important mechanism in this place to ensure that details in legislation are resolved. While I had no intention to offend the committee, on reflection I feel my letter might have been better drafted. I specifically wish to withdraw the use of the word "misleading" in the last paragraph of my letter.

Papers

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

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

Long-term contracts:

David Colussi, dated 27 July 2016.

Gordon Elliott, dated 27 July 2016.

Gregory Jones, dated 19 July 2016.

Julie Field, dated 19 July 2016.

Short-term contracts:

Julie Nolan, dated 15 and 19 July 2016.

Melanie Taylor, dated 12 and 19 July 2016.

Melanie Taylor, dated 22 and 27 July 2016.

Peter Le Lievre, dated 18 and 19 July 2016.

Shaun Strachan, dated 18 and 19 July 2016.

Stephen Edwards, dated 26 and 27 July 2016.

Contract variations:

Kathleen Goth, dated 20 and 21 July 2016.

Louise Gilding, dated 26 and 27 July 2016.

Margaret Lee, dated 15 July 2016.

Mark Jones, dated 20 and 27 July 2016.

Philip Canham, dated 18 and 19 July 2016.

2016 Strategic Review of the ACT Auditor-General—Government response.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 29—*Inquiry into 2016 Strategic Review of the ACT Auditor-General—Recommendations of Report*—Government response.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 24—Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2014-2015—Recommendations Nos. 17 and 18—Government response.

Legislative Assembly (Parliamentary Budget Officer) Bill 2016—Select Committee—Report—*Inquiry into the Legislative Assembly (Parliamentary Budget Officer) Bill 2016*—Government response, dated August 2016.

Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services—Standing Committee—Report 12—Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2014-2015—Recommendation 2—Licence Agreement with National Capital Authority for Floriade 2016.

Mr Corbell presented the following papers:

Coroners Act, pursuant to subsection 57(5)—Report of Coroner—Inquest into the death of Gail Maree Cleathero—

Report, dated 8 February 2016.

Executive response.

**Auditor-General's report No 4 of 2016—government response
Paper and statement by minister**

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Report No. 4/2016—The Management of the Financial Arrangements for the Delivery of the Loose-fill Asbestos (Mr Fluffy) Insulation Eradication Scheme—Government response.

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

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: I am pleased to present the response to the first ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce performance audit report. The report was released by the Auditor-General on 27 May this year and examined the financial and governance arrangements for the delivery of the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme. Madam Speaker, at the time I said, and I repeat, that this is a positive report about the work undertaken by the Asbestos Response Taskforce. This is something the community can have confidence in and the task force can be proud of.

The Auditor-General made three recommendations in the report. These were to publicly report on the total cost of the scheme in annual budget papers, to continue to disclose the financial impact of the scheme in financial statements, and to continue to migrate all relevant task force records into an online record system by the end of 2016. The government has agreed to and commenced work on these recommendations. In fact, I am pleased to say that even when the recommendations were first made by the Auditor-General work was already underway on all three of them.

I would like to take this opportunity to outline some of the many positives included in the inaugural performance audit report for the task force. It is fair to say the report shows that the scheme has been undertaken with strong governance and with financial and risk controls in place that promote transparency and accountability. Despite the challenge of delivering a complex, never-before-delivered program containing a high degree of uncertainty, the task force approach to governance and risk management reflects better practice.

The task force has mature and practical arrangements in place to the extent that risk management is embedded into daily processes. This can give the community a strong level of assurance and confidence that the scheme is being delivered in an efficient

and effective manner. I particularly highlight the Auditor-General's conclusion that the task force's approach to its work demonstrates leading practice in implementing a program of unprecedented scale and complexity for the ACT public service.

I want to congratulate the task force for the work that they do, especially at the coalface, and their staff as well. I commend the government's response to the Assembly.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Report 30—government response

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (3.28): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 30—*Inquiry into the Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme—Quarterly progress reporting—*Government response.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Papers

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Act—Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Blood Donor Form 2016 (No. 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-194 (LR, 21 July 2016).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2016 (No. 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-185 (LR, 1 August 2016).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2016 (No. 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-186 (LR, 1 August 2016).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2016 (No. 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-187 (LR, 1 August 2016).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2016 (No. 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-188 (LR, 1 August 2016).

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act and Financial Management Act—Cemeteries and Crematoria (ACT Public Cemeteries Authority Governing Board) Appointment 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-192 (LR, 18 July 2016).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act—

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Eligible Activities) Code of Practice 2016—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-195 (LR, 26 July 2016).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Record Keeping and Reporting) Code of Practice 2016—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-196 (LR, 26 July 2016).

Government Procurement Act—

Government Procurement (Non-Public Employee Member) Appointment 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-190 (LR, 11 July 2016).

Government Procurement (Non-Public Employee Member) Appointment 2016 (No. 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-191 (LR, 11 July 2016).

Leases (Commercial and Retail) Act—Leases (Commercial and Retail) Amendment Regulation 2016 (No. 1)—Subordinate Law SL2016-19 (LR, 11 July 2016).

Planning and Development Act and Financial Management Act—

Planning and Development (Land Agency Board) Appointment 2016 (No. 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-201 (LR, 1 August 2016).

Planning and Development (Land Agency Board) Appointment 2016 (No. 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-200 (LR, 1 August 2016).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Belconnen District) Determination 2016—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-193 (LR, 25 July 2016).

Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act, Road Transport (General) Act, Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act, Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act, Road Transport (Third-Party Insurance) Act, Road Transport (Vehicle Registration) Act and Workers Compensation Act—Road Transport (Taxi Industry Innovation) Legislation Amendment Regulation 2016 (No. 1)—Subordinate Law SL2016-20 (LR, 26 July 2016).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (General) Public Passenger Services Licence and Accreditation Fees Determination 2016—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-199 (LR, 29 July 2016).

Road Transport (General) Act and Victims of Crime Act—Road Transport (Offences) Amendment Regulation 2016 (No. 2)—Subordinate Law SL2016-18 (LR, 30 June 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act—Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Maximum Taxi Fares for NSW Taxis in ACT Region Determination 2016—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-198 (LR, 29 July 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Regulation 2002—

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Bus Services—Service Standards 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-206 (LR, 30 July 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Demand Responsive Services—Service Standards 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-207 (LR, 30 July 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Hire Car Services—Service Standards 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-208 (LR, 30 July 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Independent Taxi Services—Service Standards 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-205 (LR, 30 July 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Rideshare Services—Service Standards 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-202 (LR, 30 July 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Taxi Services—Service Standards 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-204 (LR, 30 July 2016).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Transport Booking Services—Service Standards 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-203 (LR, 30 July 2016).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act—Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Electricity Transmission Supply Code) Approval 2016 (No. 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2016-189 (LR, 12 July 2016).

ACT women's plan 2016-26

Paper and statement by minister

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): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

ACT Women's Plan 2016-26.

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

Leave granted.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, as the minister for women, I thank you for the opportunity to be able to table the ACT women's plan 2016-26. We live in a great city which offers a level of opportunity and support that is not found in other parts of the country. A high proportion of women in the ACT are employed in either local or federal governments and are afforded the protections of secure employment, maternity leave and nation-leading return to work provisions. This results in Canberra's women enjoying some of the highest workforce participation, educational attainment and incomes for women anywhere in Australia.

However, there are also groups of women in the ACT who face a range of barriers to full participation in our community. The ACT women's plan 2016-26 has a strengthened focus on ensuring all women in the ACT are able to benefit from the opportunities available in our community. This new plan has a particular focus on the way multiple identities overlap. The ACT government recognises that intersections of culture, disability, socioeconomic factors and gender can make it harder for

Canberrans to get involved in our community. The Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, with the support of the Office for Women, have developed an innovative approach to tackling this complexity. I am thankful for their dedication and leading role in this work.

This new plan takes the structure of an overarching framework which sets out the key directions and priorities in relation to the ACT government's work in the area of improving outcomes for women and girls living in the ACT, particularly for women who are vulnerable or who experience discrimination.

The priority areas to be addressed in the ACT women's plan 2016-26 are women's health and wellbeing, women's access to stable and affordable housing, women's right to safety at home and in the community, and women's economic security and leadership. The plan also sets out a course of action to introduce targeted measures to improve outcomes for women who are at heightened risk of discrimination. Key to understanding and responding to the needs of all women and girls is an understanding of the intersection of gender and other factors such as culture, disability, sexuality, experience of violence and economic status.

The ACT women's plan 2016-26 pays particular attention to developing a rich understanding of these intersecting factors and how women can best be supported to improve their capacity to take part in the economic and social life of our city. Three action plans will be developed over the life of the plan. Each action plan will be finalised through consulting across government and with the community through the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women. Focusing on priority areas will enable each plan to delve deeply into the impacts of intersecting discrimination in order to deliver positive outcomes for all women.

It is important to appreciate that women's safety is a key priority of this government and that this plan complements and supports the ACT's efforts to address domestic and family violence against women and their children. As a government and a community we recognise that gender inequality is driving domestic violence. Domestic violence is not an isolated act. It is the hard end of the spectrum of social norms and behaviours that perpetuate the idea that women are not equal to men. There has been significant progress in the past decades, but this message is still enforced too often in all areas of our community.

When women are paid less for the same role as men, when the workplaces they dominate remain the lowest paid in the country, when one in two mothers report workplace discrimination and when women make up less than 30 per cent of the federal cabinet, the message is sent loud and clear that women's contributions are worth less than those of men. This plan recognises that if we are going to achieve equality, it is not enough just to improve the statistics. It is not enough to have a segment of Canberra's women enjoying equality. We need to ensure that ability, race, sexuality, culture and language are never impediments to a woman's inclusion and enfranchisement in our community.

This is a real plan to deliver on the commitment that the ACT government has made to addressing gender violence, which includes the ACT prevention of violence against

women and children strategy 2011-17, the ACT strategy—which aims to prevent violence against women both inside and outside their homes and to reduce the number of children exposed to violence—and the national plan to reduce violence against women and children, which has identified gender inequality as a major focus for work in the coming years.

Further to this commitment, the emphasis on improving outcomes for women at risk of discrimination will support the government's social inclusion and equality program to strengthen policies and practices in response to poverty, deprivation and discrimination, with special acknowledgement that social, political and cultural factors can lead to women in our community being at greater risk of marginalisation and disadvantage.

Progress under the ACT women's plan 2016-26 will be monitored through an annual statement presented to the Assembly for International Women's Day. This statement will outline progress against priority areas of the plan and allow us to celebrate progress and identify opportunities for improvement and further work. I am committed to working towards gender equality for all ACT women and I commend the ACT women's plan 2016-26 to the Assembly.

Reconciliation day—public holiday consultation outcomes report

Paper and statement by minister

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): For the information of members I present the following paper:

Reconciliation Day Public Holiday—Consultation Outcomes Report, dated 29 July 2016, prepared by Elton Consulting.

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

Leave granted.

DR BOURKE: As the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs I thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker, for the opportunity to table the outcomes report from the recent public consultation process on my proposal to establish a reconciliation day public holiday. In June 2016 I announced that the ACT government would start a discussion with the Canberra community on a proposal to celebrate reconciliation with a public holiday. I proposed the establishment of a reconciliation day public holiday that would not be a new public holiday but rather replace an existing public holiday. This outcomes report was developed following an extensive community and stakeholder consultation process which included 94 written submissions received in response to the letters to key stakeholders and the first time to talk consensus process. One hundred and fifty people responded to the time to talk online survey, 25 participants attended public forums and six interviews were held with key stakeholders.

I am delighted to report that the outcome report found that people who participated in the consultation process overwhelmingly supported the proposal to establish a reconciliation day public holiday in the ACT. Whilst there was no consensus on a preferred date in the focus groups or the interviews it was generally agreed that the day needed to have a strong link to something that is culturally or historically significant. 2017 will be a significant year in terms of reconciliation. 27 May 2017 will mark the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and 3 June 2017 will mark the 25th anniversary of the Mabo decision, which legally recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a special relationship with the land, a relationship that existed prior to colonisation and still exists today.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to table the report.

Appropriation Bill 2016-2017

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2016-2017

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee report

Estimates 2016-2017—Select Committee—government response]

Detail stage

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Schedule 1, Part 1.5

Debate resumed.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.38): I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate and the appropriation for this year. Of course this is a new directorate that has seemingly grown by the day in terms of the scope and responsibility and covers everything from parking fines and vehicle registration, from land release to managing the ACT property portfolio and even having an international interest of late as well. The directorate has a huge budget of over \$972 million. But, as I said, the scope of this directorate seems to grow each day. I think this poses a significant issue for many other public service agencies because as this agency grows bigger and bigger it leaves many of the other agencies, some of them small but some of them not so small, wondering exactly what their responsibility is.

For instance, I know for a fact that we are seeing a creep of this agency into areas in public transport and the government seems to be doing more and more out of the Chief Minister's directorate rather than actually leaving it to the other agencies. Why the Chief Minister's directorate did the recent survey into public transport usage is beyond me. Surely that is the sort of role that should be undertaken by the former TAMS where the public transport experts really are. I think it is very peculiar that you would see that sort of centralisation for something which is obviously better suited to the specialists inside agencies such as the former TAMS.

One of the significant areas in the directorate is, of course, treasury, and the fact that treasury has been swallowed up by the Chief Minister's directorate does, I think, pose

some issues. Whilst there are certainly going to be some benefits in having treasury incorporated into a larger agency so that you do not get those corporate overheads and those corporate issues that a stand-alone agency would have to meet, having the treasury agency within the Chief Minister's directorate I think means that you do not necessarily get the competitive tension that would be preferable. Ideally we should have a treasury that is separate, that is able to give independent advice to the other agencies. I think that is especially so when you have got the Chief Minister's agency, perhaps somewhat in the economic development area, putting forward a proposal and then you have treasury, who is in the same directorate, meant to give independent advice.

I do not doubt the ability of the staff of treasury to give independent advice but I do think the actual circumstances in which they are giving that advice are not necessarily conducive to being able to be as independent as I think they need to be. To that end I would be very interested if the Chief Minister and Treasurer was able to address in his remarks exactly how it is that you still get that competitive tension between treasury and the other agencies, especially the Chief Minister's economic development directorate, so that you actually get all the competitive tensions that a government needs in order to get the best possible outcomes.

Of course there are some serious issues, I think, in the budget. One of them is the valuation liability. This is something that we talk about a great deal at this time of year but it is something that I think in the presentation of the budget in particular does need to be addressed. It goes to the discount rate of six per cent in the outyears. Of course the six per cent discount rate is nowhere near what the actual interest rate needs to be and because of that you are seeing, in effect, a blowout in the liability each year as the actual percentage comes in as opposed to six per cent.

I know that this has been an issue that has been discussed within government for some time but I think it really does need to be addressed because there is, I believe, a real issue with the presentation of the budget, to the tune of \$3 billion. Instead of there being a \$3 billion shortfall in the year of the budget it is \$6 billion and it always is \$6 billion. So you always get this massive blowout in actual liability and it all goes to the fact that we have a six per cent discount rate in the outyears which really should be more reflective of the actual interest rate which is going to be achieved. And I am sure that there would be many actuaries that would question the reason for that six per cent discount rate.

Further to this there is the medium-term outlook particularly with regard to the deficit and we seem to have repeatedly had a government that promises that in two or three years time we are going to miraculously have a budget surplus. But the surplus never comes. They keep on promising and they keep on abandoning that promise. Once again we are seeing the government commit to a surplus, this time in 2020, but I think we all know that they will not achieve it. This is a Labor government that is absolutely incapable of delivering a surplus, it seems, despite these promises. Actually the Pegasus report does discuss this in some detail whereby they actually show that year after year a promise is made.

In 2010-11 the government promised that they would be back in the black three years later. In 2011-12 again it was three years later. In 2012-13 it was two years later. In 2013-14 it was two years later. In 2014-15 it was three years later. In 2016-17 it is three years later. There is a trend developing. It is the government that likes to pretend that they are chasing a surplus but in reality they are not.

It goes to whether there is a structural issue in the budget and whether there are actually going to be long-term issues. It is the government that is, in effect, seeing expenditure growth being faster than revenue growth in the general government sector and that is a fundamental problem with the government. If that keeps continuing, if you do keep getting expenditure growth going considerably faster than revenue, the situation can only get worse.

But it does beg the question: what is actually the reason for that? The government may claim that it is the mining boom coming to an end, the asbestos eradication scheme or cuts to the public service federally, but each of these has been known about for some time.

This is a government that has been running a fear campaign on public service jobs for a long time. Yet each year's budget seems to treat it as some surprise, and they keep using it as a surprise excuse in each budget. Of course it is a furphy that this is a major contributor to any issues with our budget, but it is the government that keeps hiding behind it.

There is also the issue of the mining boom. Many economists were saying that the mining boom would come to an end. The federal budget several years ago stated that there were going to be declining revenues due to the mining boom. Yet here we have it in our budget that the mining boom is the reason why we do not have a budget surplus in the ACT, which begs the question: when you get 42 per cent of your revenue from the commonwealth, what real impact would the mining boom actually have for ACT revenue? It is actually pretty marginal. Whether the mining industry is extremely strong or extremely weak is not going to have a tremendous impact on our ACT budget. It is certainly not going to influence our own-source revenue. It may impact the revenue we get from the commonwealth. Even so we have seen an increase in revenue from the commonwealth this year and it seems we are going to keep seeing it.

I think it would help if we actually had a genuine fiscal strategy in the ACT, if we actually had genuine principles that the government was trying to follow. Whereas numerous states around Australia actually do stipulate principles or key performance criteria that they try to meet in their budgets, the ACT government simply does not have that. Instead all that we have is:

The 2016-17 Budget reinforces the Government's commitment to a fiscal strategy that achieves an operating balance over time.

That is the extent of the fiscal strategy in this budget, as far as is actually documented. (*Second speaking period taken.*) If that is the extent of the strategy, it is no wonder

that this government does not actually have a clear trajectory to get back to surplus. What would be far more useful would be if there actually were a comprehensive list of key performance criteria that they were striving to meet. As I said, numerous other jurisdictions have this and I think it would be well worth the ACT government's trying to adopt this as well.

There are numerous other areas within the agency which need to be addressed. My colleague Mr Hanson has already spoken about the impact of rates in the ACT and the growing impost it is on so many households. And it is interesting when you look at the tax mix as presented in this year's budget and the two outyears, and also in previous years budgets, you do see a significant increase in the fire and emergency services levy in addition to rates, stamp duty. And we have got the new safer families levy. When you add all these on top of each other, even when you include the insurance levy, you are still seeing a significant year-on-year increase. Far from being simply the transfer of stamp duty revenue into rates, you are seeing a significant increase in the actual rates take as well, especially when you factor in those additional levies that I mentioned.

Whilst the government may say that they have gone ahead in leaps and bounds with regard to abolishing insurance taxes, the truth is that this loss of income has been well and truly compensated for by significant increases in other income that is being presented on the rates bills.

I will also touch on the LDA and land release in the territory. This is one of the real issues with this government's management of what is a very important resource. But it is not just a financial or economic resource, it is also a very important social resource and we need to make sure that children in the ACT have the opportunity to grow up and have the ability in the future to buy a house, preferably to buy land if they so choose, in the ACT. Of course we are not seeing that at the moment. We are seeing, I think, very few first homebuyers able to buy land in the ACT. And we are seeing other jurisdictions, most notably New South Wales, and other councils, most notably the Queanbeyan city council, compete in this space.

As I have said before, there are many costs to a federation. But one of the benefits of having a competitive federal model is that you have jurisdictions competing with each other, and that is exactly what is happening over the border in New South Wales with the Queanbeyan city council. They are able to deliver land to market through a private provider at less than half the cost that the LDA is delivering land right now in Throsby.

It is no wonder that in fact the LDA is not even selling that land now, that people are in effect turning their nose up at the prices. When you are charging \$1,000 a square metre just for the land and someone goes and buys a 400-square metre block and is hit with \$400,000 before they have built a house, that is out of reach for so many Canberrans, in fact, the tens of thousands of Canberrans that are looking to buy their home. Because of that, you are seeing people look to estates such as Googong or Tralee or to the west of Canberra in Murrumbateman for opportunities to get into the housing market.

We are actively seeing other private entities compete in this space quite directly. There are radio ads that if you cannot afford in Moncrieff or you cannot afford in Throsby or you cannot afford in Molonglo, move out to Googong or move out to Tralee. We are also hearing the same ads for Murrumbateman where in effect they are advertising that you can get a house and land in Murrumbateman for the same price as you get just the house here. And not only that, there is a fair chance you are going to have significantly cheaper rates as well.

That has huge flow-on effects for our economy as well. It means that for all time we are going to be losing these people as contributors to the ACT economy as residents. I think that is a real shame.

Government members interjecting—

MR COE: It is all very well for Mr Barr and Mr Gentleman to interject that you are not getting curbs or gutters or you are not getting town water but those capital costs are a very short-sighted way to look at the situation. To look at those capital costs as being in any way a long-term problem I think is a bit of a worry. Those capital costs can be spread over many decades but what cannot be spread over many decades is the lost revenue that we are not receiving on a yearly basis as a result of these people choosing to live over the border simply because of the price.

We also have serious concerns with this government's lease variation charge. Just this week the government, it appears, approved the Labor Club not having a change of use charge back in 2011. The Labor Club rushed it through before the government introduced the new lease variation charge arrangement. When the government said that they were going to bring in a fairer system, when they said that bringing in codification was going to be great, obviously the other arm of this government, the Labor clubs, were not quite singing from the same song sheet. In actual fact, at the same time as the government was saying, "We need to bring in a lease variation charge," the Labor clubs were going at top speed to make sure they got their leases varied under the old system.

This is a government that then criticises us for saying that we want to have a level playing field for people in the town centres and in the city. It is a bit rich when this is a party that in government seems to have benefited to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars by going under the old arrangement that did not require codification. And what is more, it was based on a second valuation of 30 apartments at 100 square metres each apartment. You are going to be very hard pressed to find a 100-square apartment in Canberra at the moment and you are certainly not going to find it on that site because they are not doing 100-square metre apartments. They are doing much smaller apartments and they are doing more of them.

Rather than generating \$90,000 profit on 30 apartments we are actually going to see a significant profit on many more apartments. That was not built into the second valuation which is so important when determining the change of use charge under the old system. The government is very sneaky. It is a party in government that has rorted this system, I think, in order to get a benefit.

There is also much that can be said about the LDA with regard to their land acquisitions around the ACT. I will be putting a motion on tomorrow's notice paper which will go to a concern about one such acquisition but I fear that there are numerous acquisitions that are of real concern. And I do not think this government are being particularly wise with taxpayers' money. At best they are not being wise and at worst they are doing something that warrants attention from investigating agencies.

There are numerous other things that I do not think I am going to have time to discuss in this brief speech. However, I will finish up on the issue of light rail. It is the government, of course, that has a \$375 million capital commitment for light rail in 2018. However, there are the 20 annual payments as well. Because of that we are seeing, I think, a massive increase in the actual interest that we in the ACT are paying. The interest on borrowings for the last financial year was \$177 million but by 2019-20 it is going to be \$226 million. By all accounts the trajectory seems to be increasing rapidly. On a per capita basis this, I think, is becoming prohibitive. (*Time expired.*)

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Disability, Minister for Small Business and the Arts and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (3.58): The 2016-17 financial year will see the government continue to implement the ACT arts policy with our vision of a diverse and dynamic arts ecology valued locally, nationally and globally. Principle four of the arts policy is to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures, an important and distinct part of Canberra's culture that deserves to be fully celebrated and represented. The ACT government has provided \$100,000 in the 2016-17 budget to enable artsACT to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultural sector to deliver specific funding for grants or programs identified through consultation. The first step will be to identify where this funding will have the most impact, through building relationships, developing the capacity of the sector and providing advocacy and support.

The 2015-16 ACT budget allocated \$496,000 over two years to support works identified in the artsACT facility strategic assessment management plan. The funding will go towards high priority safety upgrades across the portfolio. In 2016-17 we have funded improvements to the fire protection system at the Street Theatre, with \$180,000 allocated to implement these important upgrades in the main theatre. These new budget initiatives are supporting the implementation of the ACT arts policy and the artsACT strategic plan and contribute to our support of the arts as an integral part of the lives of individuals as well as the social and economic fabric of Canberra.

The budget for 2016-17 provides \$6.6 million over two years for the continued implementation of "Confident and business ready—building on our strengths", the ACT government's business development strategy. ACT small business is a key stakeholder in the implementation of confident and business ready, and the ACT government continues to work with the small business community to leverage the size and diversity of economic opportunities that exist across the Canberra region.

Across a group as broad and as large as small business our approach is necessarily broad based. We know the small business community want a growing economy and a vision for the city. They want a fair and sensible regulatory system. They want services and information from government that are easy to access. They want the ACT government to look at their capability to support goods and services and they want a cost competitive environment.

Across all these areas the government is delivering a growing economy. The latest state final demand figures place the ACT as Australia's fastest growing economy with an increase of 1.3 per cent in the March 2016 quarter. Red tape is being reduced in a systematic and ongoing manner through legislative reform. Access Canberra is transforming the way we interact and deliver services to the community, including the small business services within it. We continue to progress reform of government procurement to support small business, including a margin of preference for ACT and regional SMEs, the introduction of the small business innovation partnership program and the employment of a local industry advocate.

Specifically in this budget small business will benefit from: \$0.3 million per annum for two years to ensure the continued successful operation of the CBR Innovation Network, our hothouse of new enterprise creation; \$0.1 million in 2016-17 to continue promotion of the CBR brand; and \$0.75 million in 2016-17 to support the development of Canberra's key capability areas, including cyber security, space and spatial economy, sports technology, health innovation, ICT and e-government which, over time, will provide exciting new areas of growth and wealth creation in the economy.

There is also a range of other programs delivered by innovate Canberra that have a very strong small business focus, including the innovation connect grants program aimed at helping Canberra-based businesses to develop innovative products and services; the trade connect grants program designed to help Canberra-based businesses with a range of export market develop activities; the four targeted programs—CBIRN, CollabIT, Screen ACT and Data 61—to support development in key industry capability in the ACT innovation ecosystem; Indigenous enterprise activities; and development of the ACT component of the federal government's business online services project.

Small business plays a vital role in supporting the ACT's growth and diversification. This budget reflects the ACT government's commitment to helping these businesses achieve success.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.03): I want to make a few brief remarks, and I will start with talking about Access Canberra and the EPA, most specifically some questions that I asked in the estimates committee hearings about the EPA's investigation and analysis of the reported ambient odour issues in some Tuggeranong suburbs. I asked whether there were sufficient resources in the EPA, because I have spoken in this place many times about the reported foul smell in some areas of Tuggeranong on some occasions and I have received many complaints from residents, as recently as this morning.

I have forwarded details of the complaints I have received from residents to the EPA as well as to Minister Fitzharris's office. As I understand it, the EPA have been collecting data about the smell and have been conducting an investigation and analysis to try to determine the source of the odour. But in the information I have received to date from the Chief Minister and Minister Fitzharris they have yet to confirm the exact source of the smell. In one letter of 5 April this year from Minister Fitzharris to a constituent, the minister said:

While there have been a number of complaints from residents, the source of the odour is not clear.

A letter of 7 April 2016 from the EPA on Access Canberra letterhead to residents says:

The EPA has not been able to conclusively determine the source of the odour.

But in answer to a question taken on notice during estimates hearings, the Chief Minister said:

The EPA has invested significant resources in investigating the complaints it received but to date has not been able to conclusively determine the source of the odour.

So the question remains whether the efforts and the resources of the EPA are sufficient. There is a lot of unrest—in fact, it would probably be fair to say anger—amongst residents of these particular suburbs, and it is quite far afield. There are probably six different suburbs of Tuggeranong and Woden that I have received complaints from on various occasions.

The Chief Minister said the government has engaged an odour management expert to undertake a preliminary assessment of the Mugga Lane Resource Management Recovery Centre and the Hume Resource Recovery Estate in April this year and that that report recommended the installation of a low wind speed meteorological station at the Mugga site.

Back in February of this year in my motion about the reported odour in Tuggeranong I called on the government to conduct some tests to observe downwind odour intensity and frequency in and around certain locations in Tuggeranong and process the data, comparing the frequency and intensity of odours. That is a paraphrasing of my motion in February. It has been six months since I called on the government to conduct these tests to the installation of a weather station at the Mugga Lane tip, so it is pretty disappointing to residents that it has taken so long to implement what seemed like quite a logical suggestion made in February.

I would also like to reiterate recommendation 49 of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017 report about Access Canberra, that is, that future budget papers provide better detail for the output class relating to Access Canberra with respect to budget descriptors and key performance indicators. In the government's response to the estimates committee report it noted this recommendation and indicated that

Access Canberra is undertaking a review of its accountability indicators during 2016-17. That is on page 19 of the government's response to the estimates committee report.

Given that the ACT government has made Access Canberra the one-stop shop for the community to access and engage with government services, including reporting foul odours in some Tuggeranong suburbs, I believe—and residents tell me—that it is essential that Access Canberra is adequately staffed and that its output class is sufficiently detailed to be able to assess whether key performance indicators are met.

I will move briefly to tourism and events and Visit Canberra, output 9.3. It creates and implements a range of innovative tourism, marketing and development programs in partnership with local industry, industry bodies and institutions which aim to support the territory's economic development through increased visitation to the ACT and region. We all know the ACT government has relocated the Canberra and Region Visitors Centre to Regatta Point and I was pleased to attend the opening last Friday. I reiterate that it is a lovely location overlooking the lake, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the reason the ACT government relocated the visitors centre was to facilitate the light rail project by freeing up that site so it can continue with the asset recycling initiative and build light rail.

I will also very briefly touch on the National Arboretum. A *Canberra Times* article of 4 August this year reported that a major review of the popular tourist attraction has revealed that more than 1,000 trees at the National Arboretum are dead and another 1,800 are in poor condition and need attention. In an answer to a question on notice from July 2016, the Minister for Tourism and Events said that 1,311 trees have been replaced in the past two financial years at a total cost of \$39,452. That is quite a lot of money spent on replacing trees. Hopefully it will be managing the trees better into the future so they do not die at such an alarming rate.

The funding for the management of the National Arboretum comes under output 9.6, with a total cost of the output for 2016-17 of \$16,707,000. Why have the government not been adequately managing the trees at the National Arboretum? They are putting a significant amount of money towards output 9.6, but we are seeing a large number of dead trees.

Finally, I will touch briefly on international flights due to start in September offering a direct route from Canberra to Wellington and Singapore. What I would like to see when Canberra is marketed as a tourist destination in these cities is that we package together the information about our city to best attract tourists. One of the issues that has been raised with me on a number of occasions is that the Canberra visitors information centre is open in standard working hours—9 to 5 weekdays and 9 to 4 on weekends and public holidays—but people will fly into Canberra on international flights outside of these hours. Where will these tourists go to find out what to see and what to do in Canberra?

The hours seem to suit the people working at the visitors centre, rather than being aimed at what will best suit visitors coming in to Canberra. It is great to have international flights coming in, but we must have the right framework in place to

support these international tourists and help them discover all of the wonderful things our city has to offer. I hope that will be looked at in a little more detail in the future.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Minister for Housing, Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Multicultural and Youth Affairs, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (4.12): I would like to take the opportunity to talk on this output class around sport and recreation in the ACT. The government continues to lead the delivery of sport and recreation policies and programs which contribute to the health and social wellbeing of the community. The evidence in favour of sport and recreation participation is clear and well documented, particularly in regards to improved health benefits, educational outcomes and economic activity. We also know of the capacity for sport to create social networks and build communities.

It is well known that Canberrans have the highest participation rate in sport and recreation activity in the nation. However, opening doors to participation for more members of our community, particularly women and girls, is a strong focus for 2016-17. The ACT government is committed to the continued provision of high quality sport and recreation infrastructure and we are continuing to invest substantially in this asset base.

A range of outcomes for the community will be achieved through the government's significant commitment to new initiatives in sport and recreation in 2016-17. The highlight of this commitment is \$33 million for a new pool at Mount Stromlo to ensure that the aquatic needs of this new urban growth area are catered for. Once complete, this facility will add to the five public pools owned and operated by the ACT government, where over 800,000 total visits were recorded in 2015. In anticipation of similar figures this year, a further \$785,000 will be invested in our pools through the pools improvement program.

The home of the Canberra Cavalry will soon be one of the premier baseball parks in Australia, with \$4.5 million committed to upgrade the current facility. The refurbishment of the existing grandstand, realignment of the playing field and improvements to the amenities and car parks will add the ball park to the suite of international class facilities in the territory.

The ACT government's funding for local sporting organisations to maintain community-owned facilities will also continue through \$400,000 for the asset repair and maintenance scheme, which provides critical support for facilities that underpin our high levels of participation. A further investment of over \$600,000 in grassroots football through the community football infrastructure program will also deliver major improvements at local football clubs. These investments are in addition to what is provided in the day-to-day management of our public sports grounds.

The ACT government manages more than 280 hectares of irrigated sports grounds, comprising 711 individual hireable fields. In 2016 the government will invest more than \$12 million in the maintenance and upgrade of these fields, employing a hardworking team of plumbers, turf specialists, mowers and rangers. More support for

facility maintenance will ensure our appetite to play is matched with appropriate spaces, private and government-run places alike.

Lastly, in this Olympic and Paralympic year we all gain a better view of the achievements of some of our high performance athletes. Government support through training grants and the ACT Academy of Sport is key to helping many of them on their way. Our equal investments of \$100,000 for the Australian Paralympic Committee and the Australian Olympic Council alike are providing further support to our athletes and the community spirit that surrounds them.

At all levels of sport and recreation the government is continuing its significant, equitable and community-based investments. Our goal is to push Canberra beyond being Australia's most active city to also being its most equitable and inclusive sporting city.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.16): I would like to make a few comments about arts funding in the budget. In the estimates committee hearing, the minister outlined the integral role that arts and culture play in the lives of Canberra residents and the economy of Canberra. Further, he said that the ACT government's arts funding priorities ensure that Canberra has a funding model that is sustainable, flexible and delivers on the principles contained within the arts policy. But what we found was that the minister had in fact provided \$98,000 less in funding for the arts in the 2015-2016 estimated outcome to what is budgeted for in the 2016-2017 budget.

It is important to reiterate that the Childers Group undertook an analysis of ACT arts funding. They collated data about 1,500 grants distributed between 2003 and 2015 on a per capita inflation-adjusted basis. In 2004-2005, the funding was \$24.79 per capita and it has decreased to \$22.30 per capita in 2015-2016. The estimates committee was advised that the shortfall equates in today's terms to \$2 million less in arts grant funding compared to 12 years ago. Unfortunately this reduced funding is causing damage to the very people who create arts in our city.

On the one hand the government talks about the important role the arts play in the economy but on the other hand they are not supporting them. Mr Barr assures Canberrans that the budget provides the right services, facilities and infrastructure that residents and businesses deserve and expect. But it appears that they are penalising the arts community who provide the very social and economic fabric that strengthens our community in creating a vibrant, culturally rich and diverse city.

Time and time again we hear that funding for the arts is not adequate. Recommendations from the estimates committee of 2016-2017 outline that the ACT government should ensure in real terms increased funding to ACT arts over the next four years. The committee also recommends that there should be a review of major arts organisation funding to assess if current funding levels meet the need and improved consultation between its agencies to maximise the benefits of the arts to the ACT community.

I think that is a recommendation that has been made in the past about ensuring improved consultation between ACT government agencies to maximise the benefit of

arts in the ACT community. So the government has decided to convene a whole-of-government working group on the arts in order to support the implementation of the ACT arts policy and consider key cross-portfolio arts policy issues. It begs the question as to why this is not already happening. After all, it is one ACT government.

I am intrigued as to how this is not already happening, despite previous estimates committee recommendations on this as well. This government has been in place for nearly 15 years and they have only just now thought to consider key cross-portfolio arts policy issues. Regardless of this situation, I am pleased that the government is now going to convene the whole-of-government working group for the benefit of arts here in the ACT.

The estimates committee report also recommended again the completion of stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre, which is a key component of the Belconnen town centre and Emu Bank foreshore. The report noted that this benefits not only the community but also provides economic benefits for the surrounding restaurants and cafes. Belconnen Arts Centre has received national recognition for various elements in their programming, as well as national funding.

Minister Bourke has apparently offered to sponsor a petition for the completion of stage 2. I guess it remains to be seen whether his support includes a commitment, not just an empty promise of support.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Education, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs and Minister for Road Safety) (4.21): I will be using this budget line item to discuss some of the work and initiatives that have occurred in the Justice and Consumer Affairs Portfolio. While this does cross between justice and community affairs and the Chief Minister portfolio through Access Canberra, it is drawn together most appropriately in this portfolio area.

Justice and Consumer Affairs is a portfolio that has broad impacts for all Canberrans. It affects Canberrans undertaking the smallest purchases through to ensuring consumer protection for large purchases like houses and cars. This portfolio area also affects the policy related to the registration of births, deaths and marriages and policy relating to the registration of many businesses throughout Canberra.

Over the past year, my focus in this area has included improvements to the law regarding retirement villages. The improvements cover important areas, such as rights and responsibilities of residents and village operators, financial impacts and ensuring that residents can actively participate in their village. I anticipate that this year work will continue during the second stage of work on retirement villages, including consideration of the issues associated with renting in retirement villages and simplifying the law for villages that are also unit titled.

Over the past year this Assembly passed improvements to the law providing recognition of a range of diverse families and individuals. These reforms allowed for recognition of interstate parentage orders, provided flexibility in documenting name

changes and built on the best practice framework for gender recognition that already existed in the territory.

Members would be aware that much of the work in the Australian consumer law space is work which occurs with interstate colleagues. In this role, I advocated for changes to improve the standards for labelling of free range eggs. A national information standard will be developed to improve the labelling of free range eggs. This will assist consumers in understanding what they are purchasing. This will lead to better welfare outcomes for chickens. On behalf of the ACT, I advocated for a stronger standard than the one that was ultimately adopted by the ministerial council.

Nationally, as part of the Consumer Affairs Forum, the ACT has also been contributing to the review of the Australian consumer law, which affects all consumers and traders in the ACT, and the development of an information standard for country of origin food labelling.

As part of the Consumer Affairs Forum, I have also given my endorsement to a number of strategies that seek to benefit the ACT and Australian community. The national strategy for improving the safety of button batteries will commence later this year, with Access Canberra participating in this compliance and consumer awareness activity.

The ingestion of button batteries is a significant health hazard to our children. Based on the figures provided to Access Canberra, it is estimated that across Australia 20 children per week present to an emergency department because they have ingested or inserted a button battery. Of these, five will be injured as a result. Children under five years old are considered to be most at risk. In 2015, a Queensland coronial investigation concluded that ingestion of a button battery led to the death of a four-year-old child. Another investigation into the death of a fourteen-month-old toddler is still under way in Victoria.

Preventing injuries to vulnerable consumers is a priority and the ACT government supports the one-law, multiple-regulator model of the Australian consumer law as it provides an effective basis for strengthening coordinated national actions that benefit Australian consumers. Ensuring compliance with the broad suite of consumer protection law is pivotal to consumer wellbeing. Access Canberra undertakes a range of proactive compliance activities to engage with and to educate businesses about their consumer law obligations.

Over the past year, Access Canberra has engaged with the motor vehicle sale and repair industry to provide compliance advice and guidance. Consumer protection and electrical safety inspectors have visited a number of retailers to ensure that electrical products offered for sale meet mandatory safety standards and to provide information about the importance of selling compliant goods. Three hundred and fifty four products have been inspected, from lamps to heaters, battery chargers and USB chargers. Overall compliance rates were high, which is a very positive outcome. Access Canberra has also focused on advertising representations within the building and construction trades industry. The aim of this activity was to ensure the legitimacy

of an advertising claim. For example, if a tradesperson promoted that they were licensed, Access Canberra checked this representation for accuracy.

False advertising can mislead consumers and can have an impact on competition. Raising retailer awareness of consumer guarantees was also a key activity for Access Canberra. Consumer guarantees provide consumers with a set of rights for goods and services they acquire. Many businesses across Canberra have been visited and provided with advice and information about what to do when a customer changes their mind about a product or requests a refund for a faulty product.

On 5 May 2016 I announced a review to holistically consider the regulation of civil surveillance in the territory. The review looks at whether the current safeguards are sufficient to prevent the improper use of surveillance technologies. The review report makes 10 recommendations to improve privacy protections while encouraging the responsible use of new and emerging technologies. Due to the broad nature of this review, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate is seeking public comment and input on the recommendations. Consultation on this will begin shortly.

In regard to business licensing, this Assembly has recently passed the Traders Bill, which reforms the way in which licensing occurs for four industries, namely, pawnbrokers, second-hand dealers, motor vehicle dealers and motor vehicle repairers. I anticipate that along with this being implemented over the next year consultation will occur with other similar types of industries to see if this model can be expanded.

Members can see from that that the team in Access Canberra, supported by the policy officers in Justice and Community Safety, have been very active in the consumer affairs and justice space to ensure that Canberrans get support and get good responses in this area.

There is a range of work to continue in this space. I have flagged a couple of issues around retirement villages and various consumer safety laws. Initially this budget will enable that work to continue and I think we will see a continued improvement in government regulation through the role of Access Canberra which, as members will see from the number of ministers speaking to it today, has a broad-ranging reach across government. It is about putting the focus on the customer and having that single point of entry to government for those who need to seek information.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (4.28): This Labor-Greens coalition government claimed that they would give the people of Canberra a rates breather this year. Over the past year the consumer price index increased by one per cent. The increase for this financial year is predicted to be not much more. The wage price index has gone up by just about two per cent. But rates are going up by on average 4.5 per cent this financial year. With this increase and the addition of levies, many ratepayers will be paying six per cent or more on their rates, which is six times CPI and at least three times the WPI. It is not much of a breather at all.

I guess breather is a relative term, because since 2012 the average rate increase for ACT residents has been 47 per cent. That is getting up towards 10 per cent a year, well on the way to tripling. The CPI has increased over this whole period by

8.6 per cent. Over the same period, wages have gone up by between two and three per cent. In Aranda, in my electorate, rates have increased by over 69 per cent. Even in suburbs like Charnwood and further west, rates have gone up by 41 per cent. There are not many people in Charnwood whose income has gone up by 41 per cent since 2012.

Notices are already in the mail to ratepayers. Already the residents of Charnwood, Aranda and every suburb in between are reeling at the impact that this will have on their household budgets. And this so-called rates breather is not much of a respite at all, for the familiar old increases will return with a vengeance next year. Next year, they will be running breathlessly with a seven per cent increase. We have seen rates increase by much more than either wages or inflation since 2012. And there are significant numbers of Canberra residents who will pay even more.

This Labor-Greens coalition government has also announced plans to significantly increase the rates for people living in units. There is to be a 20 per cent increase for 2017-18 and a 15 per cent increase in 2018-19. This probably includes at least one retirement village in my electorate, in Burkitt Street in Page, where there are three retirement villages. These residents cannot even get a bus service for their street, and the bus shelters, which double as resting points for seniors on their daily walks, have been removed.

One self-funded retiree expressed his frustration in the *Canberra Times* recently, saying:

My rates have increased by 14.9 per cent in the last year. By contrast my superannuation income which is indexed according to the CPI has increased by 1.3 per cent.

To cap it off, literally as well as figuratively, some pensioners will have rebates capped at 2015-16 levels, meaning they will face hyper-increases in rates bills in future years. This just underscores the disdain Mr Barr and the Labor-Greens coalition government hold for senior residents in this city.

We in Canberra must be very wicked people, because there will be no rest for any of us for at least another 16 years. This Labor-Greens coalition government's plan to increase rates by more than CPI or wages growth will stretch out until at least 2032. Residents who are looking for real rates breathers should vote for the Canberra Liberals in October.

When the so-called "tax reform" project was introduced in 2012, the plan was to phase out stamp duty on conveyancing by increasing rates. If we look at budget paper 3, we see that revenue from residential conveyancing is forecast to grow from \$182 million last financial year to \$213 million in 2019-20. Residential rates revenue is forecast to increase from \$273 million to \$371 million. Indeed, stamp duty for more expensive homes is still higher than it is in New South Wales and will continue to be for at least two more years.

Last year, Mr Barr told the estimates committee:

The government retains the capacity to be flexible on the exact finish date for stamp duty phasing out.

He will be very flexible indeed, I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr Barr has turned his back on his tax reform package. He has started to walk away from all the talking about abolishing stamp duty. It is no wonder that many Canberrans have lost faith in the so-called tax reform process.

The tax reform process was supposed to reduce the government's reliance on revenue from land sales. Yet government critics such as Tony Powell, former head of the NCDC, have said that the government is trying to "justify rezoning for medium to high density residential development and sale of land in the foreshore area in order to meet its budget imperatives". The former Treasury official Dr Khalid Ahmed has claimed that the budget is unsustainable in terms of its "reliance on land development and land revenues". So far it is fair to say that the so-called tax reform process has not reduced the government's reliance on land sale revenue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you would think that for the revenue forecast to increase so strongly in coming years, the ACT budget would be in good shape. However, the budget deficit is projected to be \$182 million in 2016-17. The budget is forecast to return to surplus in 2018-19. That is if you believe in the tooth fairy.

The report by Pegasus Economics prepared for the estimates committee casts doubt on these forecasts. The Pegasus Economics report on the budget states that every year since 2010-11 the budget is forecast to return to a small surplus in the last or second last year of the forward estimates. Pegasus goes on to say:

- After 2011-12 up to the current Budget, the expected deficit has worsened at each successive Budget.

In each year between 2010-11 and 2016-17 the climb back to surplus has become longer and steeper.

This is the legacy of the Barr government. Khalid Ahmed has also cast doubt on the budget forecasts, saying:

There's a question mark around the credibility of the forward estimates, I would put it quite bluntly ... It's difficult to see how the operating result can improve so dramatically over the coming years ...

Mr Barr has warned of supposedly blowing the surplus. That is easy for Mr Barr to say. For him and his Labor-Greens coalition government, the surplus is on the never-never.

The greatest risk to a budget surplus for the ACT is another four years of a Barr-Rattenbury Labor-Greens coalition government. Irrespective of what happens federally, Mr Barr has put financial management and the financial future of the

ACT at risk. The billions of dollars that the government is spending on building a tram network that we do not necessarily need should be put elsewhere. This project should be cancelled as part of a plan to restore the ACT's financial stability.

I would like to turn now to Access Canberra. Currently, this Labor-Greens government has seven ministers in a nine-member government. It must be the most top-heavy government in Australia, if not the world. Despite all those ministers, power has never been more centralised than it now is in the Chief Minister's office.

If you look at the administrative orders, the power concentrated in Mr Barr's hands through Access Canberra is very significant. The administrative orders show that Mr Barr has ministerial responsibility through Access Canberra for the following areas: building utilities and lease regulation; electricity, gas, water and sewerage industry technical regulation; environment protection and water regulation; fair trading and registration, inspection and regulatory services; occupational building licences; public health protection and food regulation; public unleased land regulation; gaming and racing regulation; and WorkSafe ACT. These powers give Mr Barr responsibility for a whole range of areas in which his ministers also claim responsibility. For example, Mr Barr is responsible for gaming and racing regulation despite the fact that Mr Gentleman is nominally the minister for gaming and racing.

In October last year, we saw Mr Greg Jones go as gaming and racing commissioner, to be replaced by the chief operating officer of Access Canberra. Staffing at the gaming and racing commission has fallen by 28 per cent. If you follow the debate over allowing the casino to have poker machines, it is clear that Mr Barr is in charge of gaming and racing and that Mr Gentleman is minister in name only. The gaming and racing commission has lost any independence it had when it was established.

Mr Barr has centralised power to his office to such an extent that it is questionable whether the public service can continue to provide frank and fearless advice. There is a risk that the public service, through Mr Barr's power-hungry Access Canberra, will tell Mr Barr what he wants to hear rather than what he needs to hear.

By way of example, let me turn briefly to planning. (*Second speaking period taken.*) Last Saturday's *Canberra Times* reported Clive Hamilton, the president of the Friends of Manuka Pool, as saying this about the government backflip on Manuka Oval:

The whole ACT planning process has an unpleasant smell about it. This will save Manuka, but with an election coming up nothing will save the chief minister.

It is notable that just about everyone thinks that Mr Barr is running the planning process through the LDA and the unsolicited bid process.

Consider this, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr Barr is losing the most capable of his ministers at this election due to factional games in the Labor Party. If the Labor-Greens coalition government is re-elected, it will be a one-man band. People who are thinking of voting and getting rid of the Chief Minister in a couple of months should remember the simple formula that Labor plus the Greens equals Andrew Barr.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (4.39): The appropriation legislation before the Assembly includes a significant funded initiative in the workplace safety and industrial relations area. This is an initiative to provide supplementation funding worth approximately \$15 million in 2016-17 to several front-line government agencies. The funding will assist agencies to meet high Comcare workers compensation premium costs. Members may recall that the ACT public sector workers compensation results are improving. For example, total Comcare premiums reduced by 13 per cent this year and lost time injuries were 17 per cent lower in 2015-16.

Despite these improvements, the Comcare scheme remains expensive for the territory and on occasion continues to result in our injured workers being away from work for longer than they need to be. Notwithstanding the recent rate reductions, Comcare rates have increased at a higher rate than the underlying wage inflation rate. Consequently, agencies have been forced to absorb premium cost increases. Some front-line agencies with relatively high-risk workforces, such as emergency services, require supplementation funding to ensure that they will remain ready to deliver critical services in the community.

Members are aware that establishing a new more efficient workers compensation scheme for the ACT public sector and negotiating the territory's exit from the Comcare scheme have been the focus of my portfolio area for the past 12 months. It will remain a major focus during the 2016-17 financial year.

The ACT is currently the only state or territory government that outsources responsibility for the care and treatment of its injured workers to another government. It is time for us to take that responsibility on by establishing a scheme that is responsive to the needs of our workforce. The design of our new workers compensation scheme is the subject of ongoing negotiation with trade unions and other stakeholders.

I am pleased to confirm that in these negotiations the welfare of injured workers and the need to prioritise return to work have been the primary focus. This is entirely appropriate and reflects both the governments' and unions' focus on the duty of care owed to the territory's workforce. The recent commitment by ACT Labor to invest additional funds in the public sector rehabilitation and return-to-work programs is another tangible demonstration of our commitment to worker welfare and will drive further improvements in public sector injury management.

Of course, the Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations portfolio is not limited to the public sector. Its primary focus is to reduce the adverse health, social, productivity and economic impacts of work injury for all territory workers and the community in general. Towards that end, in 2016-17 we will work with industry to review the implementation of recommendations from the getting home safely inquiry into construction industry safety and adopt and promote best practice programs to improve the health, wellbeing and resilience of the territory's workforce.

The suite of reforms arising from the 2012 getting home safely inquiry has been a major success story for government and industry. I recently reported to the Assembly that since the government accepted and began implementing the inquiry recommendations, we have seen an enormous improvement in the prevention and management of injury by the construction industry.

This improvement is made all the more significant by the fact that it has arrested and reversed what has been a deteriorating trend over several years. For example, since 2012-13 the number of lost time injuries in the construction industry has reduced by 34 per cent even though the size of the industry has increased.

The average cost of workers compensation claims in the construction industry has also reduced, which suggests that in addition to preventing injuries the industry is also getting better at helping workers return to duty. This is critically important when you consider that the longer an injured worker remains away from the workplace the greater the likelihood is that they will never return.

These safety improvements are not limited to the construction industry. In the private sector generally the most recent independent actuarial review shows that lost time injury rates are at a 10-year low. These results are extremely promising and suggest that the government's investment in both public and private sector injury management initiatives is paying real dividends.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the legacy of Mr Fluffy has brought asbestos awareness into the consciousness of every Canberran. In June the ACT government passed legislation to increase compensation payments and streamline access to services for workers suffering from an asbestos-related disease. Previously there was no vehicle for claiming statutory lump sum compensation for asbestos-related diseases. In the absence of statutory lump sum compensation, workers were left to pursue a long and stressful common law process involving court proceedings.

In addition, the very long time lag between the exposure to asbestos and the onset of an asbestos disease has meant that an insurance policy in place at the time of exposure did not often respond to a claim because it would have expired by the time the condition became apparent.

The Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2016 addressed these issues by creating an asbestos disease statutory lump sum payment and providing for the centralised management of these claims to ensure equitable and timely access to statutory compensation. A key focus in 2016-17 will be bedding down these legislative changes and introducing improved claims management practices and procedures to minimise stress on the worker and their families.

Another major reform in the sector was the legislation to require large territory employers, specifically those who pay more than \$200,000 in workers compensation premiums per annum, to adopt and appoint a return-to-work coordinator for their business. This change reflects a modernised approach to the regulation of work injury

management which brings the ACT into closer alignment with other Australian jurisdictions.

A return-to-work coordinator is a person whose principal role is to assist injured workers to remain at, or to return to, work in a safe and durable manner. By facilitating positive return-to-work outcomes and reducing disability duration for injured workers, we expect that the return-to-work coordinators will reduce costs for employers and increase health outcomes for workers.

To reduce administrative costs for employers, the territory recently paid for a return-to-work coordinator training course for around 30 people and several insurers have also been offering training free of charge for their insured employers.

This government is committed not just to creating jobs for Canberrans but also to helping them stay in those jobs. We have aligned workers compensation and work health and safety inspector right-of-entry powers to improve regulator effectiveness and efficiency. These changes will allow inspectors to respond to workers compensation or safety issues in the course of the same inspection activity.

The amendment is responsive to a recommendation of the getting home safely inquiry to address sham contracting practices. Sham contracting can involve employers improperly classifying their employees as contractors in order to avoid paying workers compensation insurance. Where sham contracting is widespread, it can reduce industry safety standards and increase the price of workers compensation insurance for employers who do the right thing. By adjusting the workers compensation right-of-entry powers, this government has significantly improved inspectors' capacity to investigate and respond to sham contracting.

In 2016-17 we will also continue to champion industrial relations protections for territory workers, for example, by opposing changes to penalty rates. In 2015-16 we saw significant inroads made in this area. For example, the Holidays Act was amended to ensure that the rights of workers to penalty rates were protected by removing all doubt surrounding the new public holiday status of Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Easter Sunday. The territory's portable long service leave schemes were extended to cover aged-care and waste management workers, making the ACT the first jurisdiction in Australia to recognise the important and challenging roles of these workers.

As Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations I am proud of the improved standards for workers and employers that have been achieved since I took responsibility in this portfolio. We will continue to ensure that Canberrans are safe in their jobs, receive their entitlements and have the work-life balance that they deserve.

To move on, Madam Deputy Speaker, my portfolio responsibilities under the Chief Minister, Territory and Economic Development Directorate also include the Asbestos Response Taskforce. I am pleased to speak in support of the important work that the Asbestos Response Taskforce does in eradicating once and for all Mr Fluffy asbestos from houses in the ACT.

It was less than two years ago that the government announced the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme to deal with the health, social, financial and practical consequences of the continuing contamination of 1,022 Canberra houses with asbestos insulation. It was in late June 2014 that the government established the task force to deliver emergency assistance in response to the crisis then gripping our city and to advise on an enduring solution to this pre-self-government legacy issue.

Since then the task force has worked tirelessly with affected home owners, with neighbours, with industry bodies and industrial organisations, with community service providers and community groups, with recognised experts and regulators in work health and safety and asbestos-related disease, with commercial entities, and with counterparts in the commonwealth and New South Wales to design and implement a program of unprecedented scale, cost and complexity in the territory's history.

In that context, the government was particularly pleased to receive the recent performance audit report from the Auditor-General that found that found the task force governance and financial and risk management frameworks were both effective and represent better practice. I note that the Auditor-General will shortly commence the second of her performance audits of the task force work, this time focusing on scheme implementation and delivery.

As of 4 August this year, the owners of 998 affected houses, including 12 assisted private demolitions and five Housing ACT properties, have agreed to participate in the scheme. The owners of 11 impacted properties have agreed to participate in the scheme. A total of 888 affected houses and six impacted houses have been acquired by the government; 291 affected properties have been demolished, 276 by the task force, 11 through the assisted private demolition; and four privately; and 187 properties have been removed from the affected residential premises register and are ready for reoccupation and rebuilding.

This deregistration process is scientifically based and evidence driven but sensibly allows retention of desirable landscaping and other improvements that are not subject to asbestos contamination. In the period between the commencement of the sale process for remediated blocks in April 2016 and 1 August, 183 first right of refusal offers have been sent, 59 blocks have been offered for public sale, contracts have been exchanged on 44 remediated blocks—three first right of refusal and 41 public sales—and sales processes have been completed on 21 blocks, which are two first right of refusal and 19 public sales.

As the demolition program unfolds, the task force will continue to make first right of refusal offers to former owners in accordance with the policy it published in September 2015. As set out in that policy, once the LDA has set the sale price, the first right holder will receive a letter from the task force offering to sell them their remediated block. The first right holder will then be required to notify the task force within 30 working days whether they would like to purchase the remediated block.

If the former owner accepts the resale offer, they have another 60 working days from receipt of the contract to reach exchange. I point out, given there has been some

evident misunderstanding among some home owners, that the time line for offer and acceptance has not changed since the task force released that policy.

The intention when the document was announced was and remains that six months before demolition the task force will commence the process to determine the sale price for the remediated block. This reflects expert advice as to the validity and currency of the valuations. Despite assertions to the contrary by some, it has never been the case that former owners would be given six months to accept a first right refusal offer.

What did occur out of necessity, given the delays caused by those opposite in the finalisation of variation 343 to the territory plan, was that prices could not be set nor could contracts be entered into as intended when the policy was announced. As was canvassed in the Select Committee on Estimates, the task force rightly pressed on with the demolition task, in discussion with affected owners, pending finalisation of that variation. The policy could not have been implemented except by delaying demolition of first right of refusal properties, which would have been a poor outcome for the home owners and the government alike.

On 29 July this year the task force updated the public demolition schedule and reported that it had exceeded its annual target for demolitions for 2016 by mid-July and it is now on track to deliver 350 demolitions in this calendar year. This is good news for former owners wanting to buy their blocks back, for neighbours of the empty houses and for the rest of the Canberra community that is bearing the cost of the scheme. The task force continues to work closely with its head contractors and WorkSafe ACT to ensure that affected properties are demolished safely and efficiently and that blocks are remediated effectively.

Safety for workers undertaking the demolitions and for neighbours and the wider community remains the paramount consideration. It is worth pausing here to reemphasise that every single remediated block sold comes at a significant cost to the territory. The scheme has never been a money-making exercise for government. Indeed, I remind members that the budget papers report that the net cost of the scheme has improved slightly to \$366 million.

The net direct cost of the first 28 remediated blocks resold was \$7.2 million, or around \$258,000 per block. That figure takes into account only the direct costs, including financial assistance to former owners. It excludes stamp duty concessions. I note that a total of more than \$14 million in stamp duty concessions has now been provided to 592 former owners.

It also excludes the government's borrowing costs on the loan to the commonwealth government provided instead of honouring the memorandum of understanding from the original asbestos removal program to pay two-thirds of future remediation work and it also excludes scheme administration costs.

The government has acknowledged from the outset, as indeed does everyone in this place, the gravity of the situation which owners of affected houses found themselves

in in mid-2014 and the significant emotional impact felt by those families as they have faced necessary and enormously complex decisions about their future.

We have stood, and continue to stand, ready to offer any assistance we can in that process. The task force continues to provide as much information as it can to owners and neighbours to help inform their decision. It continues to draw linkages with community services and community groups. It continues to offer personalised advice through the personal support team.

The Mr Fluffy issue has plagued our city since 1968 when the original warnings about installation in houses with pure raw asbestos were unheeded, through to the original removal program in the late 1980s and then through to the early 1990s to today. There is no doubt that there should be a full inquiry into the issue. But one that does not proceed with the willing cooperation and assistance of the commonwealth government is futile and cannot do justice to this complex and long-running story.

The consensus advice of experts consulted by the task force, subsequently confirmed when the New South Wales government examined the same issues, is that houses contaminated with loose-fill asbestos insulation cannot be saved. Demolition is the only enduring solution to the health risks posed by the presence of this form of asbestos inside the houses and the practical, social and financial consequences it generates.

The path to Canberra and Canberrans leaving Mr Fluffy behind, sadly, lies only through the demolition of contaminated houses and the psychological and social rebuilding that will come as new ones are constructed. That is not an easy or straightforward path, but it is the right path, indeed, the only path.

The government remains committed to the eradication of Mr Fluffy asbestos from our city through the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme. I commend the appropriations and the ongoing work of the committed team in the task force to the Assembly.

Mr Hanson: I seek leave to speak.

Leave not granted.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.58): I rise to speak to the budget line items relating to economic development, business and industrial relations within the portfolio area that is Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development. Whilst I have only had responsibility for part of this line item for less than a month, I feel a great affinity with the issues that are attached to these areas.

Firstly, Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot go any further in this output class without first mentioning the government's memorandum of understanding with UnionsACT. The memorandum of understanding between the ACT government and UnionsACT casts an all-pervading, sinister eye over all business transactions undertaken by this Labor government and serves to underpin our economy in a

negative way, stifling business and, worse, placing the power of veto in the hands of the union bosses over all procurement decisions.

What is the final straw, however, worse, is that this has been in place secretly for years. Industry groups did not know about it, businesses did not know about it and members of this parliament did not know about it. The Master Builders Association of the ACT is quoted as saying in relation to the secrecy of the deal:

It is both disappointing and alarming that throughout this entire period, the ACT Government clearly failed to bring to the public's attention that they had a MoU with UnionsACT which, amongst other things, demanded that companies seeking public work in the ACT were required to make an undertaking to provide the Unions with employee information including names and addresses of workers if the relevant Union (the CFMEU) requested access to that information.

The fundamental premise of the MOU is the power of veto. The MOU demands that unions be consulted as to who is awarded a tender or pre-qualified, as "consulting" is defined in the MOU as:

"more than a mere exchange of information" and that "for the consultation to be effective the participants must be contributing to the decision making process not only in appearance but in fact ...

This clearly goes well beyond what business expects is the process of consultation. Federal minister for employment, Senator Michaelia Cash, was correct when she stated in the media:

I have to say in the ACT, it appears has now four levels of government. You have the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and then of course there are the unions. Labor want to put the unions at the very top of the structure. There is no doubt that, based on this document, the ACT government runs a closed shop. In the ACT, it is determined by the unions and at a cost to the taxpayer.

Going to what we understand about the MOU and to the Chief Minister's comments in question time today in relation to the use of OfficeMax, he said that the involvement of the executive in a procurement decision or the procurement process would be corruption. Madam Deputy Speaker, I put it to you and I put it to those opposite that the unions' involvement through your ministers' offices in the procurement process has well and truly corrupted the procurement framework in this territory.

One other item of expenditure that is in this budget that I must address is the appointment of the position of local industry advocate. During estimates hearings we learnt that this position is worth a cool \$200,000 per year. Mr Barr stated during the estimates hearings that this role is to advocate extensively in the interests of the ACT business community to ensure that work that can be and should be done by local businesses stays in the territory. I would argue that, contrary to this statement, I have seen no evidence, nor can the government provide any firm evidence, to suggest that this money is being well spent or that those outcomes are being fulfilled.

We have raised numerous examples in this parliament looking at Citywide, the company that was awarded the arterial roads mowing contract in the ACT, a subsidiary of the Melbourne City Council. When it gets to the point where those opposite are endorsing the decision to employ the Melbourne City Council to mow lawns in the ACT, it clearly shows that local business is not at the forefront of the decision-making process under this current government.

Again today I have raised the example of the decision to go with OfficeMax as a stationary supplier to the whole of government. It was selected, I believe, through a panel arrangement tender. Locally owned and locally operated businesses that are also on the panel are being told that there has been a directive from somewhere within government to all areas to say that, as a priority and as a first port of call, OfficeMax is to be the supplier of choice. That comes at the expense of local businesses. It comes at the expense of local jobs.

Those families that have risked everything—risked their homes, risked their livelihoods and risked all their retirement savings to open businesses, not just to supply to government but to create opportunities and try to better themselves—are having the door shut by those opposite in deciding to go with a multinational company that is on the ATO's list of tax dodgers. Those opposite would rather support a multinational that dodges tax than support local mum and dad businesses here in the ACT. I think that goes to the crux of the values those opposite hold when it comes to economic development.

The ACT is in a state of flux when it comes to the economy. We are becoming more and more reliant on the heavy lifting done by the private sector. Almost 50 per cent of own-source revenue comes from businesses paid by way of rates, fees, taxes and charges. Payroll tax in its own right brings in nearly \$440 million. That is under the most aggressive payroll tax framework seen in the country. The Chief Minister, though, does not see this and, instead, seeks to blame businesses, particularly local businesses, for, in his view, not playing their part. He is on the record as saying, "The private sector are not exactly stepping up to the plate at the moment making large investments, although we are seeking that. We are going overseas for that because we do not think we are going to get it locally." I would put it to the Chief Minister, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is not that local businesses are not trying to step up to the plate; it just they are never quite sure where that plate is.

You only need to look at what is happening in various areas of government and the Chief Minister's confusing messages to the club sector primarily. The club sector is simply looking for confidence and the ability to plan their businesses over the next 10 to 15 years. They want to know what your plans are, particularly in the realms of the casino. The keep Canberra open campaign has just seen one of the biggest backflips in recent times from this Chief Minister. There was a proposal to slug local night clubs horrendous fee increases and deny them the opportunity to stay open until the early hours of the morning. There has been a backflip but, again, how do these businesses plan for their future when they are never quite sure where the goal posts are that this government is trying to encourage them to aim for?

Another classic example is pay parking in Phillip and a backdown from this government. We would have seen apprentice mechanics working in the Phillip precinct paying as much as 20 per cent of their take-home pay per week in car parking. Those opposite will say, "Well, catch a bus." But for those starting at five or 5.30 in the morning, there are not adequate bus services to service that area. Again, when the Chief Minister scratches his head and says, "Why isn't business doing what we expect them to?" have a look in the mirror.

Red tape has become one of the catchphrases of every little bit of annoying bureaucracy placed in the way of starting and growing a business. If we were to believe all this government would have to say, we would think that we are working towards reducing red tape. Numerous red tape reduction bills that have been introduced into this parliament have also claimed to be making it easier and more efficient for business. But the efficiencies, as we heard earlier today in the Chief Minister's comments, go largely towards reducing the burden on government. They make it easier for government to function and very rarely have any material impact on the day-to-day operating of a local business.

Just in the past couple of weeks I have been contacted by a number of businesses that are having extreme difficulty in receiving their licence as a food business. One is a butcher; one is a cafe. The cafe is a new venue, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is even in the electorate that we share down at our local shopping centre at Chisholm. Six weeks before they began construction of their shop fit-out they submitted plans of their fit-out through Access Canberra. They sought advice and no comment was made. When the time came for their final inspection the representative from Access Canberra said, "I've had your plans for weeks, but I haven't looked at them. Oh, and by the way, now that you've spent the money and you've completed your fit-out, there are a few issues."

How is that encouraging business or encouraging investment in this city when the goal posts are being moved? Proactive businesses are asking government, asking Access Canberra, for a direction and a way forward, or advice as to whether or not their shop fit-outs are compliant, and they receive no comment until push comes to shove and the investment has been made. It comes at an additional cost to jump through the regulatory hoops that those opposite seek to place in the way of business to make sure that their livelihood can be maintained and that the business can actually open. (*Second speaking period taken.*) What makes things worse is the fact that most businesses in this town seek to do better by themselves, by their staff and by the community. It should be the responsibility of government and the responsibility of all of us in this place to facilitate that and to actually make it easier for them.

Looking back at the decision to choose OfficeMax as the primary stationary supplier and also the supplier of cleaning products, one of the businesses that have made a representation to me on this issue is actually a supplier of cleaning products and paper products for bathrooms. One of the most concerning things that they raised of this government decision is the fact that they found out not directly from government but in informal, quiet chats with the bureaucrats that they deal with from time to time,

who said, “Look, the reason we can’t purchase from you anymore is we’ve been told to purchase through someone else.”

Communication, I think, is one of the key things that businesses want from government. They want to be able to have an open dialogue. They want to be able to seek advice. They want to be able to have an understanding that when they have an issue and they go to government with it, it is not going to be used against them and that government will work collaboratively with them to achieve an outcome.

These local businesses, in the OfficeMax example, have been supplying products and have even tailored their businesses and business models to suit particular niches created by government. The ramifications of the decision to choose multinationals over local operators will be widely felt through the food chain, not just those businesses and their staff directly, but through the other local businesses that they use to carry out the functions that they do.

When it comes to jobs and jobs growth, I cannot fail to mention the *Canberra Times* report today which calls out the scare campaign being waged by ACT Labor as we head towards the election in just 66 days time. It is a scare campaign around jobs which is clearly unfounded and based on nothing. The article in today’s paper starts out by saying:

An analysis used by Labor to claim the Liberals would cost 2000 jobs is fundamentally flawed and significantly exaggerates the depth of any cuts.

It goes on to say:

Opinions were then sought from three economists, all of whom said the 2000 figure was misleading.

The analysis continues, and I quote again from the article:

Economics Professor Phil Lewis, who heads up the University of Canberra’s Labour Market Research Centre, described the analysis as “definitely wrong and flawed”.

I will repeat that. He described it as “definitely wrong and flawed”. This in itself is one of the greatest overreaches we have seen in this term of parliament being perpetuated by none other than the Chief Minister and Treasurer. If the Chief Minister and Treasurer is incapable of assessing the opposition’s costings, what hope has he got of continuing to run the Treasury books of this territory? What confidence can anyone in the territory have that the man at the helm is actually capable of being abreast of all of the issues and, in fact, presenting documents that are not definitely wrong or flawed?

The final issue I would like to touch on in the remaining time I have is one that a number of my colleagues have already touched on and that is the cost of rates. Rates bite every single property holder in the ACT and every single resident in the ACT that seeks to rent or lease a premise, be it commercial or residential. In the electorate, down in Tuggeranong, one of the primary issues is light rail. The cost of light rail

scares most residents of Tuggeranong. They say the only way they can afford it is if their rates continue to increase in the fashion that they have. Most families are more concerned about the fundamental bill that comes in every quarter, and that is, their residential rates.

Whilst the Treasurer continues to insist that it is a progressive change, that it is fair and that it is just, he fails to recognise the impact that that has on the average working family. It might be evidence of too much time spent in government, too much time spent as a minister and not enough time spent with the average workers of Canberra. We have seen 10, 12 and sometimes 14 per cent increases in residential rates that have burdened families. And this year he has the hubris to say, “It is only four per cent this year because there is an election, but don’t worry, the pressure will be back on next year and we’ll be coming after you.” If you live in a unit title property, it will be 20 per cent this year. But the government says, “You get the double act because we’ll be coming back for another 20 next year.” What does that say not just about the cost of living for owner-occupiers but, even more concerning, the cost of housing affordability for those who are struggling most to make ends meet?

Inevitably, a cost that is put onto a landlord is a cost that will be passed on to a tenant. Increases in land tax, increases in rates and increases in unit charges all get passed on to the end user. Then you compare that to the commercial side of things. As I described in this place last week, commercial properties are paying almost 10 times the rates when compared to an equivalent residential property. Your dress circle address in Forrest is paying \$8,000 in rates, but your simple basic warehouse in Fyshwick is paying almost \$80,000—10 times.

There is no greater drag on the ACT economy and no bigger inhibitor to jobs growth in this economy than the Treasurer and Chief Minister. In just a matter of days, in just under 10 weeks, Canberrans have a real opportunity to change the government, to change the direction. Come this time next year, we may well be debating the positives of a new Liberal government’s budget.

MS FITZHARRIS (Molonglo—Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services and Assistant Minister for Health) (5.15): I am very pleased to speak on this budget item this afternoon and to detail how this government is supporting our higher education and training sector to diversify our economy, drive the jobs of the future and make Canberra the research capital of Australia. These will be based on jobs built around our knowledge and ingenuity.

The ACT is uniquely placed as a knowledge economy, with over half a dozen tertiary education providers basing themselves in our city. We are the education capital and I am proud that this ACT government has a long history of proactive engagement with Canberra’s education and research sector.

This sector is nationally and internationally recognised and provides opportunities across a range of specialisations as well as attracting high quality national and international talent in our student and staff bodies. We educate 44,000 post-secondary students each year, including 12,000 international students and a similar number of

interstate students. In addition, a report from Deloitte Access Economics found that the higher education and research sector contributes \$2.7 billion per annum to Canberra's economy and creates approximately 16,000 full-time jobs. It is a significant industry for the ACT and one that as Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research I have been excited to champion to ensure that we can help continue to diversify our economy.

This Barr Labor government is committed to working with the sector to promote Canberra as Australia's education and research capital, being the first point of contact for the education and research sector for proposals that have economic development opportunities, having an oversight role and ensuring that the economic development aspects of proposals from the sector are given high priority across government, and ensuring that all government directorates are forward looking and work with our local institutions to capitalise on research and innovation opportunities.

In order to achieve each of these things, the government has committed to a number of specific actions to support the development of the sector. Through our study Canberra program the ACT government is working with the educational institutions to enhance the student experience, to ensure coordinated and consistent marketing and to promote Canberra as a higher education destination of choice. This work is essential as the recruitment of international and interstate students not only ensures we bring the best and brightest people to Canberra but also creates approximately 6,100 full-time equivalent jobs and adds \$879 million per annum to Canberra's economy.

The establishment of the CBR Innovation Network two years ago brought together the major higher education and research institutions—ANU, UC, UNSW Canberra, Data 61 and CSIRO—to work collaboratively to drive the government's innovation agenda. The addition of CIT to the network this year is a very welcome development and brings the vocational education sector into the innovation community.

The agreement of these institutions to join and fund the network is a clear recognition of the need to create a supportive innovation ecosystem if the institutions are to succeed in their goal of commercialising research to the benefit of Canberra and Australia. The recent decision by the government to join the medical research commercialisation fund and the decision to support the establishment of the significant capital ventures fund, a joint initiative of ANU, UC, and the Hindmarsh group, are clear indications of the government's ongoing support for innovation and commercialisation. Last week I was proud to sign up the ACT to the medical research commercialisation fund, which will help our world-class researchers get the work out of the laboratory and into the marketplace.

The ACT is also set to move to the forefront of healthcare delivery by investing \$7.3 million in new diagnosis and patient care technology that will allow existing new and existing drug therapies to be tailored to individual patients based on their genetics and individual conditions. This new genomics program will build on existing research, expertise and achievements of the Centre for Personalised Immunology at the John Curtin School of Medical Research at the ANU to develop genomics as part of a clinical and diagnostic service in partnership with ACT Health.

Through the “confident and business ready—building on our strengths” campaign the government has agreed to work in partnership with the CBR Innovation Network to support the higher education and research institutions goals of developing key capability areas. These are the national and agricultural environmental sciences precinct, led by ANU and CSIRO; the information and communications technology and e-government cluster, led by Data 61 and ANU; the cyber security innovation cluster, led by ANU, UNSW Canberra, Data 61 and UC; the ACT space innovation cluster, led by ANU and UNSW Canberra; the sports technology cluster, led by UC; and the health innovation cluster also led by UC.

I will take a moment to specifically mention the government’s continued and ongoing support for the defence industry, including through the position of the recently appointed local industry advocate, a position we created to strengthen ties between government and the community and to make connections across our higher education research institutions, the ACT and federal governments and our higher education institutions.

In successive business development strategies we have highlighted our defence capability in our city and the particular potential we have in cyber security and the space and spatial sectors. Indeed, on behalf of the government, I have addressed a number of defence industry events in the past couple of months, including in June the defence and industry 2016 conference, the first time this conference was held outside of South Australia. I pitched Canberra’s defence industry credentials to the biggest players in this field, and the day after the conference the government arranged for a number of Canberra companies to pitch directly to defence’s global supply chain forum.

Following the release of confident and business ready last year, the vice-chancellors forum agreed to work with the government to oversee the implementation of the commitment to promote Canberra as Australia’s education and research capital. At our most recent meeting the forum agreed to an international education strategy, a collaborative approach to attracting investment in the key capability areas, and a proposal to work closely together to create more internships for students attending Canberra’s educational institutions.

Skills development, whether through a tertiary degree, a vocational qualification or the application of research, is a critical piece of our economic development ambition. Access to a highly skilled workforce is one of the advantages Canberra has to offer and is a significant enabler of economic growth. The diversification of Canberra’s economy relies on a high-performing VET sector that allows our skilled community to contribute to the economic prosperity and social engagement in our city. This requires improved collaboration both within government and with our business and industry stakeholders.

The move of Skills Canberra earlier this year into the higher education, training and research portfolio will enable greater alignment of our vocational education and training services with our areas of economic development and better connections between education skills, jobs, community safety, health outcomes and productivity.

Skills Canberra is working with local RTOs, including CIT, to make sure local industry and business has access to a highly trained and skilled workforce, and the potential students are guided towards qualification with a higher chance of employment.

To do this the ACT government unveiled last year the signature entitlement program, skilled capital, to capture industry need and to fund training programs that will deliver training in high skills needs areas. Skilled capital was developed as one of the ACT government's commitments under the national partnership agreement on skills reform. The skilled capital initiative provides \$21 million over three years to improve access to high quality training in areas of skills need and to maximise improved employment outcomes for students.

The initiative also provides a comprehensive range of student support services to ensure students accessing training receive the help they need to successfully complete their chosen qualifications. As at 8 August—just yesterday—there have been over 3,500 enrolments in skilled capital since the program was launched in February last year. The skilled capital 12-month evaluation was conducted in the early part of 2016 to review the first year of operation. Although skilled capital is still within its pilot phase, the evaluation showed that the program is clearly meeting the intended outcomes with high completion rates and great outcomes for students undertaking qualifications in high skills needs areas.

The ACT government through this budget has a range of measures that will support this billion dollar industry: our education and research industry. The government is committed to developing policies, programs and initiatives in this area which will grow our economy, drive jobs growth in the future and make Canberra truly the education and research capital of Australia.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (5.25): I wish to speak on the sport and recreation output class. We are a city that loves our sport. We have numerous teams competing at the national level doing us proud. Just this year we have had the Brumbies get through to the super rugby quarter finals and the Raiders are currently sitting third in the NRL. We had the Canberra Heat men's and women's teams in volleyball make the national league finals at the end of last year, with the men taking out the national title. More recently the CBR Brave ice hockey team secured their third consecutive trip to the Australian hockey league finals. Canberra United women's football team continue to be one of the best teams in the country and the Canberra Cavalry made another appearance in the Australian baseball league finals.

Of course, all these teams and their successes could not happen without the continued support of the community-level grassroots sports. Unfortunately, this is where the community has felt most let down by this government.

It is a regular occurrence in my office to have sports clubs call, visit or email me about the state of our local grounds. Clubs talk of grounds that have major divots, turf missing and even sprinkler heads that stick out of the ground. One particular junior sports club told me a story about how every week they need to put a witch's hat over a protruding sprinkler so that kids will not injure themselves on it.

It is quite instructive to take a review of the state of some of the sportsgrounds around Canberra, highlighting the issues that have been brought to my office. Let me start with Greenway. At Greenway, the surface of the oval, surprisingly, is itself quite good, which is quite a contrast to some of the other ovals I am going to talk about. But in Greenway the issues are more infrastructure based. The changing rooms need a lot of upgrading and the seating needs significant work.

In Gungahlin the lighting had to be replaced—it was incorrectly installed in the first place—apparently at no cost to the ACT government. But the question needs to be asked: where is the supervision as to what is being installed? Why such an oversight? How could that happen? And what is the actual impact and cost on Canberra sport?

Gungahlin is supposedly a purpose-built, multipurpose ground, but the playing surface is shocking, to use the words of the sports renting it. There is no subsoil drainage installed. The question remains: how is that going to be addressed, at whose cost? Also, I understand the work was done by an out-of-town contractor who is no longer working in the ACT. The cost to the individual clubs using that is enormous. Not only will the work have to be rectified, but what will happen to the clubs playing on that ground while that rectification process goes on?

At Kippax in Belconnen, again there is no subsoil drainage. I hear that the government is talking about ripping it up again to install subsoil drainage there as well. The anecdotal evidence we get from people using it is that it is an absolute mud pit. In the Kippax area, the oval is being flogged to death—again in the words of the individual sports using it—with schoolboys playing during the week and then it being torn up for the weekend games of the seniors. I understand the football club there locally contributed a large number of dollars to the oval, but it is often available for their use. I also understand that the AFL recommended subsoil drainage. The government went ahead without it. When there is no proper oversight, all of these issues can occur.

Let me move to Woden oval. The government spent over \$7 million on this multipurpose facility. A new synthetic running track was installed to enable Little Athletics to host major meets at this venue. But no grandstand was planned for this facility, and portable seating was only upgraded after we raised this as a major oversight, along with the fact that there was no sunshade provided for athletics, which, of course, is a summer sport.

So a major venue for both athletics and football which could have been a showpiece is, in fact, a major blunder in terms of planning. While planned as a venue for major Little Athletics meetings and football matches that could host between 1,500 and 3,500 spectators, it has no grandstand to cater for the spectator numbers, just a few portable seats that can cater for around 400 spectators. What about toilet facilities? Spectators have access to three toilets—individual toilets, I might add. Multiple individuals cannot use them at the same time.

These are things that could have been, should have been, done better.

Then there are the priorities of this government that leave a lot to be desired for community-based sport. There is the Kingston oval, which needs an urgent upgrade of dressing room and grandstand facilities. The oval is used by cricket and AFL. There are around 3,000 players playing at these ovals and at other nearby ovals. These sports contributed around \$40,000 to carry out a much-needed upgrade at Kingston oval earlier this year. The ACT government's contribution was \$8,000. Compare this in terms of priority with Mr Barr's commitment to beach volleyball—around \$750,000 for the upgrading of the beach volleyball venue, with six new beach volleyball courts at a cost of around \$750,000 for a sport that has around 300 social players.

Woden park had a few other issues. One that we need to talk about is the state of the ground; there was an issue there. When the Woden-Weston Football Club came back to play on the venue that they had had to vacate for 12 months, they came back to a playing surface that was inferior to the surface they had before the \$7 million redevelopment.

Of course, all of this was delivered to the local sport community at a cost far higher than ever before. The cost of delivering community sport has become substantially higher year after year. I have had multiple clubs approach me telling me their story of how higher charges for ground hire are making it harder and harder to deliver their sport. The higher costs mean that clubs are being forced to consider charging more to parents and participants for uniform costs, equipment costs and so on.

This government has had no shame in gouging our community for hire charges. Late last year I had another club tell me that in order to attempt to keep the training costs down they shared the hire cost of an oval. However, when they received their respective invoices, they had both been charged the full cost of lighting and were told that they could not split the cost. Both clubs were required to pay the full amount. I think Mr Wall was referring to red tape; this fits into that category pretty well.

Clubs of outdoor sports are not the only ones who are finding life tough. The Olympic pool has had a number of issues over the last few years. We had the continued leaks and the closure, which all lead to a future that is clouded and uncertain. What is the future for the Canberra Olympic pool? What about the diving pool?

This government seems to have no plans to consult with the aquatic community about what facilities they need. This is in direct contradiction to the government's response to the indoor facilities study in January in which the minister said:

... I am committed to supporting all Canberrans to have access to quality facilities and to encourage active living.

That is, of course, unless your sport's facilities require having a diving board, a pool that does not leak or an oval that has a quality surface or, in some cases, just being able to get access to a community facility such as the Mpower dome.

Many of these community sports have no avenue to have their voices heard after the demise of ACTSport. ACTSport had provided a way for smaller, local community sports to have access to office space, training and a voice to the government. Unfortunately, we watched on as this government saw fit to allow ACTSport to collapse. In fact, in certain quarters the claim is that the government actually engineered the collapse of ACTSport. It is a shame; in fact, it is a disgrace. But like so many other issues in Canberra, it did not surprise me. As we all know, this government do not like community consultation or hearing from locals who disagree with their way of doing things.

Having the number of high quality, top-level teams playing in and representing Canberra is important. But it should not come at the expense of community sport. Without community sport, these teams will fall away. We cannot sustain these teams without grassroots level support and involvement. *(Second speaking period taken.)* There are the everyday mums and dads that are running under-10 soccer training on Tuesday night in their spare time and the high school kids who are at the basketball stadium on Saturday morning. They are the future: our next Canberra United superstar, a future Brumbies captain or perhaps another Patty Mills. These people cannot be forgotten. At the moment they are beginning to feel as though this government is leaving them behind.

Sport and recreation does not even have the name as its agency's title anymore. I am not sure what Active Canberra is supposed to indicate, but I wonder if it does not imply a move towards recreational non-government-funded activities, away from support for organised sport and provision of grounds, pools and tracks. Is money directed into sport and recreation other than at the international tourist level going to be yet another victim of the light rail folly? I guess that if families are not taking their children to sport on a weekend, they can catch the tram from Gungahlin to the city and back as a form of recreation. Perhaps that is where the demand curve for this service is intended to come from.

Madam Speaker, to take up the rest of my time, I would like to go to the venues part of my presentation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes; you have 10 minutes, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The budget says very little about venues other than that it promotes and manages major events at venues including GIO Stadium, Exhibition Park, Manuka Oval, Stromlo forest and the Canberra Business Event Centre. And what a mixed bag of places this list is. Only today we read in the media that if the Raiders qualify to have a finals game in the third week, they will not have the privilege extended to other clubs of staging it on a home ground.

The Brumbies have struggled all year to get crowds at their games despite the fact that they have been playing probably some of the best rugby the club has seen. The GIO ground infrastructure improvements required have been ignored by this government.

Exhibition Park is not fit for purpose for many events. The annual Royal Canberra Show has one of the largest horse competitions in Australia but the stabling at the grounds is unsafe and unsuitable. Facilities are almost non-existent. No money is forthcoming from this government to do anything other than minor upgrades: new toilet blocks, and some drainage, but little else at that particular venue, despite the fact that events like the Canberra show bring millions of dollars into Canberra, just as the annual Summernats and folk festivals do.

Stromlo Forest Park has been the lucky recipient of a number of improvements, and the equestrian facilities are significantly better than they once were. But given that it is the nature of this government to take land at a moment's notice and given that they will need to find more buckets of money if they want to continue their light rail folly, if I were a member of the equestrian fraternity I would be very worried that centrally located land like Stromlo Forest Park—and even Exhibition Park, sitting as it does on the light rail corridor—are prime suspects for takeover. In Exhibition Park's case, that would explain the chronic neglect.

The Civic pool, strictly speaking, is not a venue under the economic directorate definition of such, but it is also victim of this government's grand plan, or grand malaise. It is suffering from neglect and age, but nothing will happen there until the city stadium dream can be delivered. Given the time it has taken just to fiddle with Constitution Avenue, building a stadium would take at least two lifetimes.

Then there is the controversy about the Barr government's so-called unsolicited bid for the upgrade to Manuka Oval, which has had the Manuka, Kingston and Barton communities up in arms over several aspects of this proposed project, including the Barr government's refusal to listen to the community. Now, a matter of eight weeks or so before the ACT elections, the Chief Minister has done another Barr flip over this issue, but only because of community pressure has he done this.

The arrogance of the Barr-Rattenbury government is finally being recognised by the Canberra community. Their common refrain is, "Roll on 15 October."

MR BARR (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal) (5.40): I thank members for their contribution in this part of the budget debate.

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate leads the territory's public sector and works collaboratively both within government and with the community to achieve positive outcomes. The directorate was formed in recognition of the continued focus on creating a one-government approach to the delivery of services to the people of the ACT, one with the critical importance of ensuring that economic development is at the centre of government policy deliberations.

Those with an interest in history would note that this structure is option A as recommended by Allan Hawke in his 2011 review of ACT governance. For those who

are asking how this came about, and about the functions within the directorate, they should look to the Hawke review of 2011, option A.

Additional functions transferred to or established in the directorate in the 2016-17 financial year include the training and tertiary education area, formerly part of the Education Directorate; vocational education and training; management of the National Arboretum; and the Office of the Chief Digital Officer.

The directorate leads the ACT public service and provides strategic support to me in three ministerial roles, as Chief Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Economic Development, as well as my role as Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Urban Renewal.

Importantly, the directorate also provides strategic advice and support to the Minister for Racing and Gaming; the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations; the Minister for Sport and Recreation; the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research; the Minister for Small Business and the Arts; and the Assistant Minister for Health.

The directorate supports cabinet by providing advice and support on policy development, territory budgeting and reporting, financial and economic policy, service delivery, whole-of-government programs and issues, high value and complex investment development proposals, sport and recreation policy and programs, tourism, government business enterprises, taxation revenue management and developing and guiding the land release program.

The amounts included in the appropriation for 2016-17 for the directorate total just over \$900 million, as members have observed: \$394.159 million for control of the current payments, a large capital program of \$437.749 million and \$73,265,000 for payments on behalf of the territory.

The key initiatives to be delivered by the directorate in this budget include \$391.4 million over the next three years to redevelop public housing properties under the public housing renewal program, comprising \$357.2 million in capital funding and \$34 million in associated expense funding. There is the significant boost to the concessions program, with \$35 million to support the most vulnerable in our community. There is additional funding to provide city services for new residences across Canberra. There is \$7.3 million to promote Canberra as a business and tourism destination. There is additional funding to implement more priorities contained within the confident and business ready strategy, and there is \$1.1 million over the next four years to continue our whole-of-government implementation of the healthy weight initiative. In closing, I thank members for their contribution to this part of the budget, and I commend it to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Community Services Directorate—Schedule 1, Part 1.6

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.44): I am pleased to talk today in the budget debate about the Community Services Directorate. The community services sector is a bigger sector of the ACT than construction or tourism and is an essential partner to the government in delivering our obligations to make a stronger society. In fact, it delivers a lot of services on behalf of the government and in a more cost-effective way than the government will be able to achieve on their own. The sector is an enabler of human capital and is a very important part of our community.

Firstly, I would like to talk a little about the 0.34 per cent community sector reform levy. Members may recall I asked a number of questions in estimates hearings last year about this when a number of community organisations raised concerns about the government imposing the 0.34 per cent community sector reform levy once again, and it has continued into this current year.

This year the estimates committee heard evidence about the importance of investment and support for the community sector. But on the levy itself I asked whether in real terms it is a cut for community sector organisations when compared to the consumer price index. I was assured that the index is applied to their base 2015-16 amounts. Whatever their actual base is for that year it then gets increased by 1.8 per cent indexation. I was assured it is actually an increase. That is on page 625 of the *Hansard*.

But if you look at it, Madam Speaker, you will see that the indexation is 1.8 per cent, with the 0.34 per cent deducted for the community reform levy, therefore giving effective indexation of 1.46 per cent. The ACTCOSS budget snapshot stated their concerns that indexation of community sector funding is not matching the cost increases that they face.

In fact I have heard from one organisation that it is experiencing a cut in real terms. This organisation told me it received the same amount of funding this financial year as it received last financial year, with no indexation applied, which is of course a cut in real terms. Is that how the government shows its support for the community sector and the people that it supports?

Community organisations, I am sure it goes without saying to everyone in this place, do fantastic work in our city. The government needs to give them support by listening and taking their feedback into account when making decisions about their funding allocations.

In fact, the estimates committee made a recommendation, recommendation 9:

... that the ACT government investigate ways to better engage with community organisations on issues relating to applying for ACT Government grants and funding.

In its response the government agreed in principle to this recommendation.

Also in estimates hearings it was outlined that the government is procuring and building a new client management system for Child and Youth Protection Services. It is my understanding, based on the estimates hearings, that the new system will be attached to the proposed family violence hub. That was one of the Glanfield inquiry recommendations. At the estimates hearings government officials said:

... our expectation is that that funding will go directly to supporting families requiring intensive support to engage with a range of early intervention and other services in order to address the issues around their experience of family violence.

I do hope that the client management system does make a difference and does ensure that decision-makers have real-time access to accurate and up-to-date information when making decisions about vulnerable children and young people, which leads me to the Glanfield inquiry recommendations and changes which have been made as a result of that.

Earlier this year I spoke in the Assembly about the need for better information sharing between government directorates and agencies in the context of care and protection and family violence. The Glanfield report, the *Report of the inquiry: review into the system level responses to family violence in the ACT*, was handed down in April this year. It made a number of recommendations not only relating to children but to clearly authorising information sharing and fostering a culture of appropriate information sharing and collaboration.

In estimates hearings on 28 June Mr Corbell said:

Mr Glanfield makes a number of recommendations around changes to privacy provisions in ACT law to provide greater clarity around the fact that offices are actually empowered to share information where there is a common objective, ie, the safety of children.

We do hope that the legislative change and the funding allocated in the budget for that does in fact result in better information sharing in the context of care and protection and family violence, so that our vulnerable children and young people are and remain safe, as do women and men who may be experiencing domestic and family violence.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children and Young People, Minister for Disability, Minister for Small Business and the Arts and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (5.50): As the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs I am committed to delivering positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015-2018, now in its second year of operation, commits both the ACT government and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to a whole-of-government approach to achieving equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT by developing and supporting strong families. The empowerment and resilience amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the ACT is a key outcome identified by the community during the agreement's consultation process.

The ACT government is about pursuing outcomes rather than measuring the things we do. In addition to mainstream support the ACT government will be investing an additional \$2.3 million over four years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT as part of the 2016-17 ACT budget. The ACT budget includes new initiatives that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and addresses Indigenous disadvantage in the ACT through strong connections to culture, supporting people through the justice system, through health care and by ensuring career opportunities.

The ACT government recognises the need to expand opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. The kickstart my career program will support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth at risk of leaving school. The ACT government will invest \$107,000 in additional mentoring and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the ACT public service to improve their leadership and career development outcomes.

Support for the arts and culture sector will build the capacity of, develop and support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community within the ACT. The ACT government will allocate \$100,000 for grants and programs that celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

A communications and engagement coordinator will be engaged to forge stronger connections with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Additional funding of \$149,000 will be made available to improve Indigenous representation and will strengthen the representation of Aboriginal people in decision-making and enhance local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural identity. The ACT government will provide resourcing to increase awareness of the elected body's role in representing the views and concerns of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and to build greater connections.

This budget and the ACT government's commitment to better outcomes will be life changing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and will be based upon supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the community and their organisations to develop opportunities, knowledge and skills to build an empowered, resilient and sustainable future.

The Community Services Directorate is continuing to deliver on reforms under a step up for our kids, and the transition to new services is proceeding as expected. We are looking forward to realising the benefits for children, young people and their families over the coming year. These benefits will include more children in permanent, loving families. A one-off adjustment of \$800,000 for the base funding of the out of home care program has been provided in this budget to support Child and Youth Protection Services in responding to current demand pressures on the out of home care sector.

As part of the directorate's commitment to the safer families agenda, \$2.47 million over four years is being invested to enhance quality assurance and improved decision-making across Child and Youth Protection Services. As part of the directorate's commitment to the safer families agenda, a new child and youth protection services

case analysis team will be developed. The child and youth protection services case analysis team will provide real-time feedback on quality of service and decisions to improve and to strengthen decision-making and accountability. This will enhance Child and Youth Protection Services' responses to families where cumulative harm is presenting.

A quality assurance and improvement committee is also being established by the director-general to provide arms-length quality assurance and compliance with statutory services. A quality assurance and improvement committee will provide transparency and accountability on the Child and Youth Protection Services' reforms underway.

Work under the blueprint for youth justice continues to demonstrate reducing numbers of young people coming into contact with or becoming involved in the youth justice system. This has resulted in a declining number of young people in detention in the ACT. To ensure that Bimberi Youth Justice Centre's operating model is effective and efficient, \$100,000 has been provided to review the options that would support better utilisation of the centre.

The ACT government values the role that seniors and veterans play in the life of this territory. The Assembly will note that the government has agreed to recommendations 10 and 11 of the estimates report, and I look forward to working further with the community on matters related to elder abuse and particularly to creating a training package to assist to identify and respond to elder abuse.

The Assembly will be aware that 18 August marks the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. The ACT government will be providing funding for our veterans organisations to mark the anniversary and we are also working with veterans on a commemorative planting to mark the anniversary.

Being a small jurisdiction, the ACT has been uniquely positioned as a national disability insurance scheme trial site and the first jurisdiction to implement the NDIS. The NDIS is a fundamentally new approach to funding and delivery of disability services and has motivated ACT providers to seek out and consider new service delivery models and ways of engaging their staff and people with disability.

Through the changing environment we must ensure that we safeguard and protect people supported by service providers through improved regulatory powers in the human services sector. The ACT budget includes \$145,000 for consultation with people with disability, families, carers and providers about how people with the most complex needs are supported to protect themselves and others. The government will undertake a review of the requirement to establish an office of senior practitioner to provide independent oversight for the reduction and elimination of the use of restrictive practices.

Finally, as the ACT enters into the final months of the transition to the NDIS, with over 4,000 people having already been found eligible for the NDIS, we still need to continue to support our clients and organisations as the transition continues over the

coming year. That is why the ACT government has allocated an additional \$718,000 to complete the implementation of the NDIS in the ACT.

At approximately 6pm, 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.

Sitting suspended from 5.58 to 7.30 pm.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (7.30): I rise this evening to talk about a portfolio that is very close to my heart—veterans affairs. I am very glad the government has responded to our calls to establish this position. I think it is good. We first announced a shadow minister for veterans affairs in 2009, and it has taken a little time but it is nice to see that the government has done this. It has been done in other states and territories, I believe; we were probably the last one to act in this space. Although the bulk of the responsibilities for veterans issues are dealt with through DVA and the federal government, there is no doubt the impact and the delivery of many of the services is here in the ACT.

As I have said before in this place, we have a particular defence heritage in the ACT stretching back to the early days of Duntroon established in 1911. Since that day many who have passed through that place who came to Canberra with their families and served in the Defence Force continue to live here. An enormous number of defence families reside in Canberra. Many, like me, come here on posting and then decide to remain. It is good that it is now a bipartisan endeavour to make sure we are doing what we can to support veterans in our community.

I was at the Luton ball on Saturday night—I am not sure if any members opposite were there; Mr Coe was there, I know—and the subject was suicide. One of the speeches was from a guy called Todd, who served in the army and shared some horrific experiences that he had. They were quite graphic and disturbing and they led to his attempted suicide. His story was very moving. He is closely associated with Soldier On, and it is great to see so many organisations in our community are looking after soldiers who are not just wounded physically but wounded psychology. It was great to see the Canberra community getting behind those veterans.

I commend the Canberra community for the support they provide for veterans groups. I rattle the tin for Legacy during Legacy Week and I do the same for the RSL, and people are enormously generous. As all of us know, it can be a bit difficult standing outside a shopping centre engaging with the public; they do not always want to stop and talk to politicians. But they always stop and give money and support charities like Legacy and the RSL that do such good work in our community. We know many veterans who have suffered from dislocation from their community, mental health issues and physical ailments and are supported by Legacy, as are defence widows.

Some good initiatives have been put in place by the government for which I commend them. The Veterans' Advisory Council was the subject of a motion in this place when I called on the government to establish that structure, and I am glad they have. It is good that the government get advice from veterans. I am aware there is some debate

in the veterans community about who should be on that board—should it be individual veterans or should it be representatives of various groups—and that is an ongoing debate.

Another thing that I would like to see from the government is further work at the ACT Memorial. Mr Stanhope put that up, and it is good we have our own memorial so that we recognise those from the ACT who have fallen. I have asked that the names of those Canberrans on the honour roll from the War Memorial are put on that ACT honour roll. I know that there is a website with names on it, but I think it would be good to make it clear to Canberrans and visitors that it is a memorial and not just a piece of art, as many mistake it for.

The government have taken a number of initiatives in this area. It was very difficult to get traction on this issue for a while, but someone has turned on the lights and they seem to now see there are issues that need to be addressed within our veterans community. A number of issues are front and centre for the veterans community. I know they are keen to get a facility on the south side, and my understanding is that various conversations are occurring with government. We have had some conversations with members of the community as well, and we will see what plays out in that space. That would be a good initiative to support the veterans community.

The Canberra Liberals have announced we will provide a grant of \$400,000 to support veterans groups here in the ACT. It would be a grant system that would then be considered through the Veterans' Advisory Council to consider the merits of those grants to support the running of veterans organisations, providing particular support for individual veterans or groups and particularly focused on the wellness of our veterans. I hope the government continue, if they should be re-elected, to work hard in this space; certainly we will if we form government.

I close by commending those organisations, and the individuals that belong to organisations, like the RSL, Soldier On, Legacy and all the other organisations doing great work in Canberra supporting defence veterans, widows and families. I hope this is an area where we can put our differences aside and work together as an Assembly to further the interests of our veterans in the ACT.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (7.38): Once again, in this budget, retirees and Canberra seniors have been hit hard with cuts to concessions and increases in their everyday costs of living. This is, however, what they have come to expect from this government. The government has refused to acknowledge the difficulties that cost of living pressures are having on seniors and continually fails to recognise and support the elderly in our community. This budget is a let-down for our senior community. I am sure Canberra retirees will not be happy with a government that is continually targeting them to find savings yet offering nothing in return. They are feeling overlooked and neglected, and I cannot blame them, especially when you consider the year-on-year rise in rates that is having such a dramatic impact on pensioners and retirees.

In the latest budget announcements the eligibility for a seniors card will now be pushed from 60 years to 65 years of age by 2025. This will result in those aged

between 60 and 65 being completely cut out from accessing the seniors card. Instead of considering a means test to determine who could be eligible, the government decided to cut this altogether without any consideration for those it will impact. This card provides seniors with a wide variety of discounts, including allowing them to access concessional fares on ACTION buses. Obviously the Barr government has deemed this not important and feels that this age group can manage on their own.

Almost 3,000 households who receive the uncapped 50 per cent rebate on their rates will also have this discount frozen to reduce costs, and the water and sewerage concessions and the energy and utility concession will all be rolled into one, costing retirees who own their own homes an extra \$200. This is clearly yet another opportunity for the government to use our seniors as a revenue source because it cannot manage a budget.

The bulky waste collection service that has been provided to seniors will cease to be provided by the government in mid-2017. This service provides a booked waste collection service for seniors to assist them in removing larger waste items from their properties. It is especially important for those seniors who are less mobile, by allowing them to remain in their own homes for longer. It is a service that is valued by many seniors in the community, but clearly not by this government.

These changes do not even take into consideration the increases in fees and charges that will impact the Canberra community as a whole but particularly those who can least afford it, like our seniors. The elderly will be impacted by the cost of rates, registering and driving a vehicle, and the annual ambulance levy, which are all going up to pay for a tram that this city does not need and does not want. Who is footing the bill, you may ask? It is those who can least afford it; those who struggle to make ends meet; those like our seniors who are some of the most vulnerable in the community.

Independent retirees are also struggling in the ACT. In the older, inner Canberra suburbs where transport is more efficient and health services are more accessible, house costs are high and rates are tripling. Living in the ACT is becoming less and less affordable, and many seniors are choosing to retire elsewhere because of this. As both a community and government we should be recognising the important contributions seniors make to the ACT economy and social community. We should be encouraging them to remain active and engaged residents and ensuring that Canberra becomes a city that welcomes the senior community and provides the best possible future for those entering retirement or aged care.

The government has continued to poorly manage issues relating to seniors over the years and has failed to properly engage and consult with the community on numerous occasions. Take, for example, the changes to concessions. The changes to the ACT concessions program took almost a year, with pensioners left in limbo not knowing which concessions might be cut and how they might make ends meet. The so-called public consultation that took place made the community feel like they were not being heard in the decision-making process.

Mr Barr took less than three days to consider the community feedback from the discussion paper before signalling to the media where cuts would occur, and these

were still not confirmed until the June budget. I have asked before how in three days the government was able to adequately consider all the community feedback and how it was able to consult with the relevant departments and officials to advise on the most appropriate course of action. This is just one example of many where this government has failed to appropriately consult the community and listen to what they want.

What about more recently with the Retirement Villages Amendment Bill? The review process was clearly not up to scratch and closer attention needed to be paid to the particular interpretations. It is fortunate that the potential flaws were recognised by affected stakeholders and residents of retirement villages, because they were not foreshadowed by government officials—just another example of poor communication with the community from this government.

The relocation of the Canberra Seniors Centre has dragged on now for nearly five years and in that time many promises have been made and programs for completion proposed. At least \$500,000 of taxpayers' money has been spent on a design feasibility study and the centre is still not any closer to achieving new premises. These are just a few examples, but the list goes on.

Even this morning in the *Canberra Times* I read that work had begun in an effort to make Canberra suburbs more age friendly. The article said that older Canberrans in Ainslie, Monash, Kaleen and Weston will find it easier to walk to their local shops as footpaths and roads are upgraded to make the suburbs more age friendly. This is ridiculous. Should not all suburbs have footpaths that are safe and accessible for all Canberrans regardless of age? This is a clear example of where the government has failed to do its job over the last 15 years, and we on this side of the chamber are regularly reminded of it.

Every week we have constituents, old and young, emailing and calling, disgusted at the unsafe condition of their local footpaths. I have even had an elderly woman contact me complaining that a footpath in her suburb which she uses to get to and from her local shops was in such bad condition that she chose to push her walker along the road instead of risking tripping on the cracked footpath. The ACT has one of the fastest growing populations over the age of 60 in Australia, and this is the best we can offer. This government should be ashamed of their activities with regard to these seniors.

In relation to my comments about footpaths, I will briefly mention Access Canberra. Access Canberra was established, supposedly, to allow people who wish to engage with the government a single point of contact to do so. However, for older Canberrans it has proven difficult to access. It is used by the community to log maintenance requests about the poor condition of footpaths or the need for streetlights to be fixed. It is recommended that the Canberra community do this via the fix my street website. What about those seniors who are not computer literate or do not have access to the internet? What alternative do they have?

This Labor government has continually put seniors last, time and time again, and they are getting tired of it. Canberra needs a government that will reassure ACT seniors, offer them basic local services and reduce the cost of living pressures placed on them.

Canberra seniors need a government that will create a better transport system and a better health system and a government that not only understands the needs of the ageing community but has the vision to make things happen.

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) (7.47): The 2016 budget invests across the government's broad social inclusion agenda and right across the community sector. There is a deep commitment to social inclusion through the government's new investments and, importantly, in the initiatives they will deliver on the ground. I draw particular attention to our funding for services provided by some of the great local organisations here in the ACT. This budget makes it clear how we value their work, in particular through indexed funding for community services programs, which has risen above \$10 million; grants provided through housing and community services which total around \$624,000; our ongoing commitment to pay equity for social and community services workers, a payment of more than \$3 million in 2016-17; and a continued commitment to reform in our service systems by bringing the better services principles to other parts of the system.

Of course, one of the most prominent parts of the budget for me as the minister for women and community services is our family violence response. It is not just about significant investment; it is about learning from extensive research to develop systems that work across government and with the community to provide support where it is needed when it is needed. The capacity of front-line services is boosted with an additional \$416,000 over four years allocated to the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and an additional \$830,000 over four years to the Domestic Violence Crisis Service. Separately, \$964,000 over three years is funding residential behaviour programs for men at risk of committing domestic or family violence, called room4change.

With a total of \$21.4 million over four years, this response measures up to the scale of the problem facing our community. It responds to three major reports on domestic, family and sexual violence in the ACT as well as Victoria's royal commission. I have been having conversations as the minister for women and community services with the community services sector, and those conversations will continue to inform the way these responses are implemented. The government's investments in community services and social inclusion are made possible by the government's broader economic management, and I thank the community sector for their positive response to the way the government has put this budget together.

The budget papers also lay out the government's ongoing commitments to multiculturalism in Canberra and to refugee and asylum seeker support. We will continue to implement the actions under the ACT multicultural framework 2015-20. These include support for booking and using community facilities and ongoing support for translation and English language training. The government is providing a total of more than \$245,000 to the Community Language Schools Association and its 42 member schools. A total of \$260,000 will also be available in the 2016-17 participation multicultural grants.

In youth affairs, I want to point to the government's ongoing support for the Youth Advisory Council, Youth Week and the inaugural young person's think tank, which is coming up later this month. I greatly value the views of Canberra's young people. The key investments in areas such as homelessness, mental health, transport concessions and employment support all of the target areas of greatest need for young Canberrans to be mobile and have good access to the people, places and services they need.

The government's aim is always to support our community to be its best and to support individuals to be included and valued. That is what underpins the 2016 budget and our work each and every day.

MRS JONES (Molonglo) (7.51): In respect of output class 1.6, I will speak to multicultural affairs and to women. Last week I brought a motion to this place addressing the enormous contribution the multicultural and multifaith groups make to our community and the importance for these groups to have a place to hold festivals, to worship, to conduct language classes or dance classes and to be as a community. It is great to hear the minister noting the money that is being paid by the government to support language schools and other great works in this area.

I talked about the importance of being able to access either land or facilities so that these multicultural and multifaith groups could have a place to call their own here in our city and how this helps their sense of belonging in and contributing to our community. I am pleased that in general the area of multicultural affairs is one that has been quite bipartisan. I am pleased, as Minister Rattenbury noted last week, that we are, indeed, a growing city. It is vital that we continue to invest in new facilities and spaces that accommodate the full range of the community's needs. It is clear that this is an issue within the multicultural area where some extra work is needed.

Echoing my motion last week, I go on being concerned about the new and emerging multicultural and multifaith groups here in Canberra and whether or not they are able to access community land or facilities to establish their cultural or faith homes. Many of the groups have been waiting for many years for access to or approval for community land or suitable facilities. Again, I think it is important that there is a very clear process that the multicultural and multifaith groups can follow to access facilities and that they have a clear understanding up-front of the time lines and time frames and a step-by-step knowledge of how to apply for land or to use a community facility. I think there is still more work to be done.

Another area that I am particularly focused on for the multicultural community is English language classes. As the daughter of a migrant, I have seen firsthand the significant benefit that access to English language classes can make. I am very pleased that we have English language classes available for our new arrivals. However, as I have discussed before, I am concerned that many women who are at home with young children are not able to access these classes as often as we would like.

Many of these families are on limited incomes and can afford only one car, which generally the husband uses to get to work. With the mother at home caring for

children, there are several barriers that make it difficult for her to access English language classes, the first being access to suitable child care. If a woman is the sole carer for her children during the day and she has no support for child care, getting to English language classes is difficult.

The second barrier for a woman at home to access English language classes is simply the unreliability or complication of using our public transport system. If she is not able to find suitable child care and the classes are not easily accessible, it is more likely she will not be attending English classes and improving her skills. Without these skills, newly arrived Australians and those waiting to become Australians are at a significant disadvantage to access all that Australia has to offer.

This is not a concern just for our multicultural community. It is also a concern for women in our city. As policymakers we must look at ways that these barriers can be removed so that migrant and refugee women can learn to further develop their English language skills and access the workforce, or all that is available to them within our community will not be theirs to use. Without strong English language skills, these women can feel alone and isolated. This can lead to depression or other mental health concerns, as well as a lack of feeling of belonging, or that Australia or Canberra is their home or can be their home.

The last area I want to speak to in dealing with multiculturalism is the National Multicultural Festival. The festival is a great event in the calendar here in Canberra. We are fortunate to be able to showcase so many different cultures across one weekend. We appreciate the broad range of stalls, from the embassies and high commissions to the ethnic community groups, the dance groups and, of course, the wonderful array of cultural foods and colours.

We are fortunate here in Canberra to be home to so many multicultural groups, and our city is richer for it. However, several multicultural community groups have expressed concern over the years about the commercialisation of the festival, with the view of some being that the big corporate vendors are taking much of the multicultural feel out of the festival. However, it is wonderful that we have had this multicultural festival for 20 years. I think we need to ensure that the festival remains a multicultural event and never ends up being run predominantly for the benefit of big corporate vendors.

I applaud much of what the government has done in this space and what the government supports through this budget in the area of multicultural affairs. I think there is always more we can do. I would like to see some work from the ACT government in the area of deradicalisation. Just because we are a small jurisdiction, it does not mean that we could never have a problem. It would be good to know that there are people out there trying to do what we can in that space.

Wearing my hat as the shadow minister for women, I am pleased to stand and speak about the importance of this area. In the time that I have been here in the Assembly the Labor government has seemingly reduced somewhat services to women, certainly their visibility. According to the ABS stats, Australia's female population hit

12 million in June last year, whereas there are still 96,300 men to go before they reach the 12 million milestone.

With the exception of Western Australia and the Northern Territory, all states and territories have more females than males. Yet there seems reluctance to spend money on women in our city. With the closure of the women's information and referral centre back in 2013 and the Office for Women having been rolled up into the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre and sharing resources with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, it seems that staff are shared across several areas. There is not just a designated Office for Women.

What this shows is that the local government is not focused primarily on this very important service area when it comes to women. It is easy to think in our seemingly comfortable Canberra that women are flourishing; but it is just not always the case. We know that more work needs to be done for working mums. This was made evident in the *Supporting working parents: pregnancy and return to work national review* report that was undertaken by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner and released in 2014.

The report, as I have mentioned in this place before, highlighted how often women feel sidelined and discriminated against when they announce their pregnancies to their employer and in their workplace. I have heard stories from many women across Canberra of discrimination and how they were sidelined for promotion or felt they had to choose between having a family or having a career.

In 2014 we heard about a public servant breastfeeding in her car. Her husband would bring the baby to the car park where she would quickly try and breastfeed in the car while husband was stopped in the loading zone. I think this was a federal public servant and there was apparently no room or appropriate facilities in her department for her to feed her baby. Our city could do more. Surely we can do better than this.

Those of us here who are mums can only imagine the stress this woman must have felt trying to do the most natural task of feeding and looking after her child simply because in this modern era we still have not come to terms with the fact that babies are a normal, natural and needed part of life. Our attitude towards mothers with babies and the need to feed tends to be one of "out of sight, out of mind". This leaves a large number of women feeling quite fearful of asking for a place to breastfeed or breast pump, which can lead to a sense of shame or embarrassment and, in the worst case, disassociation from the workforce, or postnatal depression.

There is a great deal more work that we need to do to get the details right for pregnant women in the workplace and for breastfeeding mums to be able to return to work smoothly. Most young women believe that within their workplace there will be a clearly defined process for how to return to work and still breastfeed or breast pump a young baby. I regularly hear from young women who are genuinely shocked to discover that there is no clear process. These women, after being off on maternity leave, often do not have the confidence or the know-how to develop a smooth process with their employer. We must be vigilant and continue to work to make these

processes clearer and more available for mums and carers who are breastfeeding or returning to work.

It is not the only area that needs additional work for women in our city. Women also need support and mentoring when they re-enter a workplace or when they want to achieve well in the workplace, whether or not they are having children. We sometimes need help in rewriting and refreshing resumes, which I know is work that the ACT government has done with many lower income women.

They need help in polishing or developing interview skills and to understand the unique employment environment that Canberra is. No other city is as heavily influenced by public service departments as Canberra is. If you are a woman seeking to enter a departmental environment, some understanding is required of how to navigate the process. There is still work to be done to help women either progress professionally or get back into the workplace after they have been out for a while after having children.

With the closure of the women's information and referral centre, several programs that contributed to this process for women seem to be no longer available. The ability for a woman to access suitable employment and to have the opportunity to earn and progress professionally is vital not just for her wellbeing but also for her economic and financial success. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

We know that women tend to retire with significantly less superannuation than men, with the average Australian woman retiring with around half the superannuation balance of the average man. What this means is that women are more likely to be solely reliant on the government age pension in retirement, which leaves them more vulnerable to poverty.

It is also important that we continue to look at public policy and the framework around the life cycle of a woman in the workforce and be willing to continually address the barriers—sometimes unintended barriers—that are contributing not only to the difficulty of women returning to work after having a baby but also to the gender pay gap and the challenge to superannuation savings for women.

A young woman when she gives birth to her first child does not expect that there will be barriers to her ability to breastfeed and her ability to return to work. I think that many young women are shocked when they experience the realities of even very modern workforces. I see that there is plenty of work to be done in public policy to support women, to remove such barriers. We still have a long way to go to get all the details right.

An issue that affects a large number of women that we have talked to a great deal over the last few years is domestic violence. No-one in this place would dispute that we need to do all we can to ensure that women are not subject to any form of violence and that women can live peacefully and safely in their homes. I do, however, want to put on the record my concern about the \$30 levy per household for domestic violence.

My concern is not that money should be spent; I do believe it should be. My concern is that rates is an area that Canberrans already feel quite concerned about. Putting the onus on to households that have already had a 40 to 60 per cent increase in rates over the last four years since the last election may make them less willing to be engaged in this process that we need to undertake.

In Weston in 2011-12 the average rates were \$1,307. Yet now in 2016-17 they are \$1,956, an increase of 49.7 per cent or \$649 per year in each and every year. In Fisher in 2011-12 the average rates were \$1,269. Now the average rates are \$1,987. This is an increase of 56.6 per cent or in dollar terms \$718 per year. Many people feel that the government now wants to use their family home as an ATM to withdraw funds from every home owner to contribute to the domestic violence levy.

Again, let me make it very clear that we do not dispute the need for domestic violence services, housing for those in crisis and wraparound services to ensure that a woman can transition from crisis to a suitable and sustainable future. However, I do have grave concerns about the approach of going to householders with another levy on their rates. It happens over and over again.

Some of the families whom we are taking the levy from have their own problems, which are exacerbated by financial problems. This one size fits all approach does not seem to take that into account. Families only have a certain amount of money in their bank accounts and in their budgets. Every time the government puts the hand in and takes more from what they need, the family can end up suffering.

Let me tell you that often when there is a pinch on the family budget it is the woman who goes without. It is the mother who always puts the needs of her children and her family above her own. More often than not it is the woman who suffers. So this government, without thinking, is again taking more money from the pockets of women.

Again, I think that in general terms in the women's portfolio we have a relatively bipartisan approach. I applaud much of what the government has done. I just think there is always more we can do in this area. I hope that one day there will not be a need for a minister for women if we actually do reach some kind of parity.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (8.05): I will speak to my shadow portfolio responsibilities of youth, disability and Indigenous affairs. I have held the Indigenous affairs shadow portfolio since I commenced being a member of this place almost four years ago. I would like to say that significant progress has been made in the space of Indigenous affairs in the four years that I have been here, but it seems that many of the issues that I was speaking about when I first took on the portfolio some four years ago are the issues that we are still talking about and discussing today.

Primarily, I guess very close to my heart, are the issues surrounding the Gugan Gulwan Indigenous youth service that operates from Wanniasa in my electorate. This is one of the premier youth Indigenous services in the ACT, providing an extensive

range of services not just for youth but also for families, new mothers and those that are suffering other medical and mental health or substance abuse issues.

For the four years that I have been in this place the major topic has been building the capacity of this service both in the scope of service that they offer, and supporting that adequately, and also in their physical presence. For four years and beyond, even before my time, they have been lobbying those opposite for larger, more appropriate premises. But for whatever reason there has been no progress made in actually addressing the spatial constraints that exist in their current premises.

The other issue that has been, I guess, front of mind not just in this place but in parliaments across the country has been the idea behind *Closing the gap*—closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. And it seems not surprising that while we fail to meet the needs of and to support Indigenous organisations in this territory we continue to fail to meet our objectives in the *Closing the gap* recommendations.

Recently I met with Kim Davison, who is the Executive Director of Gugan Gulwan, and she described the current situation of Indigenous affairs in the ACT as a crisis. In correspondence she said:

Indigenous young people from our region for more than two decades now have experienced a crisis like that which we are currently confronted with. We are not resourced to be a crisis service but are a refuge of last resort for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families seeking help in the midst of a crisis.

For someone such as the executive director of Gugan to be referring to the state of Indigenous affairs in the ACT as a crisis should be a warning for all of us that things are not well within the local Indigenous community. I think it is incumbent on all of us, but particularly those opposite who are the executive, to take decisive action in addressing these needs and help to come up with solutions.

The solutions do not necessarily come from the cabinet deliberations that occur upstairs, from the brainstorming that those members opposite have, but come from working collaboratively with the Indigenous community, sitting down with them at the grassroots level, at the coalface, seeing what the problems are, seeing what they think will work. Any solutions to addressing the Indigenous issues that we see in the ACT needs to come from community. They will not come or originate necessarily from this place. But it is our responsibility to support community in achieving the outcomes.

A big part of that role can be played or should be played by the elected body. I would envisage that there should be also a larger focus on building the capacity of the elected body insofar as its outreach and also its engagement with community are concerned. It has been the facilitator for a lot of the discussion and the consultation that needs to happen between the executive, members of this place and the front line of community. It should work collaboratively with all involved and come up with the solutions that are required once and for all.

I hope that by this time next term we can actually talk about successes in the Indigenous space: how we have maybe put a stop to the youth suicide rate; substance abuse is not so much of an issue; and, hopefully, no removal of Indigenous children from their families.

The issues that are occurring in the ACT are vastly different from those that we have seen in the Northern Territory, particularly the backgrounds that those children at the Don Dale Detention Centre have come from. If we cannot sort the problem out in the ACT what hope do we have of working with Indigenous Australians outside the ACT?

In terms of the disability portfolio, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you have previously held the ministerial responsibility you will know that those on both sides of this chamber are supportive of the transition to the NDIS and the promising future that that means for so many in our community of inclusiveness and finally having choice and control over the services and the activities that they partake in to help them lead and live a fulfilling life. Whilst there has been support from all in this place about the transition to the NDIS it has not been without, I guess, scrutiny being conducted adequately.

I as the shadow minister have raised, on a number of occasions, issues about the process and the form that the transition in the ACT has taken, first of all in the cut-and-run mentality for providing early intervention services for children with autism in the preschool units. Disappointingly, what I had said was likely to be the case—that is, as government exited the space without an adequately equipped private sector or community sector there would be children unable to access services in a timely fashion as they needed—has been the case.

Over the weekend I met again one of the mothers that I worked very closely with a couple of years ago who had her daughter in preschool. I said, “How are things going? How has the transition to the NDIS been?” Concerningly she said, “There have been promising signs and that is great.” But the concerns were that services were harder to access, the workforce development in the ACT had not been, I guess, up to her expectation, that there were services that she had previously been able to access that she was now no longer able to access, and that the wait list for many services had also increased.

That was echoed while doorknocking in Gordon over the weekend where I met the mother of a young man who was in his mid-20s, who has got a severe intellectual disability and who previously was able to access full day care services such as organised activity, socialising, some craft and meaningful engagement in community. He felt like he was valued. And that was fully covered under the block funding arrangements. But, since the transition to the NDIS, not just this man but all the other people that were accessing this service now have this substantial shortfall as a result of their NDIS package. This family, in their account, are between \$400 and \$500 dollars per month out of pocket now under the new system whereas they previously had all their services covered. There are still gaps in services. The NDIS is not a perfect panacea. There is still a lot of work to be done.

I think the other area which has been highlighted on a number of occasions in this place is the advocacy and advisory services—organisations like Radio 1RPH. It is warming that they have received some funding support, but it did not come from the government here. It was not forthcoming from those opposite. It was actually the coalition federally that stepped up to the plate and said, “This is a valuable service. It needs to be retained.” And they have committed to making sure it is viable for at least the foreseeable future. Likewise, those on this side have already made an election pledge to continue funding in some small part the great services that Radio 1RPH provide in the reading of the newspapers or important articles for the print handicapped.

In my time as the shadow minister, other organisations such as the Down Syndrome Association have lost their previous funding stream. Government was unable to come to the party and support them but, thinking proactively, I worked with them and we managed to secure other funding streams. But there has been a lack of framework to ensure that these organisations, as the transition has progressed, have actually got some certainty or some assurances about what the future of these organisations might look like and what the future holds for them.

I will touch very briefly on youth and in particular focus on Bimberi detention centre. I think there are some major questions that still need to be answered as to the future of this facility. The custodial population of the facility continues to decline, and that is a promising sign. I think we can do better by our young people than locking them up.

I think that the focus needs to now be on what the future of this centre is. It is a large facility for such a very small number of detainees or prisoners. Those on the opposite side have danced around the topic of maybe doing something else with the facility or what the future uses of it might be.

Dr Bourke: Did you notice the budget allocation?

MR WALL: Pardon?

Dr Bourke: Did you notice there is a budget allocation?

MR WALL: There is a budget allocation.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not a conversation across the floor.

MR WALL: The minister is interjecting, “Did I notice the budget allocation?” Yes I did, and I notice that there is some money in there for upgrades. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

Other questions need to be asked about what is actually happening out at that facility as the population does decline. There was a report in the paper recently that there is an inquiry into an incident that happened out there. It was very vague. It said, “We are looking at something but we cannot tell you anything.” It is not exactly open and transparent government. I think at least it would behove the minister, before the

Assembly rises for the election, to make a statement, perhaps on Thursday, actually explaining what he can about the scope of the inquiry that is occurring out there or the types of behaviour that it relates to.

Perhaps he needs to come in here and at least guarantee that the types of instances that we have seen coming out of the Northern Territory youth corrections system are not happening here. People in the community are left guessing as to what is happening. Hopefully, the minister will enlighten us, if not tonight, before the Assembly rises at the end of this term.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Cultural Facilities Corporation—Schedule 1, Part 1.7

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) (8.17): I am pleased to make a few comments regarding the 2016-17 budget for the Cultural Facilities Corporation. Firstly, the government is providing \$50,000 towards a marketing campaign for a major show in Canberra. This will be a significant show for Canberra theatregoers and I look forward to saying more about this in the coming weeks. This will build on the Canberra Theatre Centre's successful record of bringing major shows to Canberra with important benefits for the community and the visitor economy.

The government is also providing \$410,000 to upgrade security and safety at the Canberra Theatre Centre. This project continues the staged improvements to the centre that commenced in 2012-13. This new funding means that over the next six years, from 2012-13 to 2017-18, the government will have made a significant investment of nearly \$9.5 million in upgrading facilities at the centre. These planned upgrades will ensure the Canberra Theatre Centre remains fit for purpose as the region's premier performing arts venue capable of hosting major theatre shows.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (8.18): Today I am pleased to talk briefly about the Cultural Facilities Corporation, which aims for Canberra to be a creative capital and see itself as a creative leader in the territory, providing a high quality cultural experience based on the arts and heritage resources that it holds in trust for the people of Canberra. It may include the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the ACT's historic places which include Lanyon, Calthorpes' House and Mugga Mugga, and a number of visual arts and social history collections.

We were pleased to see funding in the budget for the security upgrade of the theatre and I note that the minister has talked about the Canberra Theatre Centre being a hub in the region. One of the points of discussion during the estimates committee was patronage of the Canberra Theatre Centre by patrons from outside the ACT.

The committee heard that for the year ending 30 June 2015, which was the most recent full year for which figures were available, the percentage of visitors attending the Canberra Theatre Centre from 50 kilometres or more away was 10 per cent, and

the ACT local, including Queanbeyan, Jerrabomberra and Yass, obviously made up 90 per cent of the patrons. But 10 per cent coming from the region further away is certainly not to be sneezed at in any way and is something that I think we can continue to develop, with people coming from throughout our region to enjoy the facilities that are provided.

I am pretty pleased with the progress of the Cultural Facilities Corporation. I look forward to hearing more about the potential new vibrant theatre complex that was recently talked about in the *Canberra Times*. I know that the Cultural Facilities Corporation is doing some work at present on researching and quantifying the need and demand for a new theatre and looking at the bigger shows that currently are not coming to Canberra because they cannot get enough people into the facility to make it economically viable. For future benefits to our economy I think it is something that is well worth looking at and I look forward to further work in that area.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Education Directorate—Schedule 1, Part 1.8

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (8.21): Education has a budget of over \$1 billion and it employs over 5,000 people, with over 3,300 in our teacher workforce. It is responsible for educating nearly 45,000 students in 87 public schools, including four special schools.

In the latest budget it is suggested that an additional \$55 million will be invested in new education initiatives, including \$41 million for improved facilities and administration for schools across the ACT. The government has also made much of its \$21 million to address the recommendations contained in Professor Shaddock's *Schools for all* report. Of course, it is hardly a response for all schools when the 40 per cent of students who are educated in our non-government schools are overlooked.

There is a planned \$1.2 million to roll out quality assurance programs, \$250,000 to have yet another go at an enrolment planning tool, and over \$1 million in transport for special needs students.

Of course, after you have been through a couple of education budgets and matched them up with election promises, they start to become one of the best examples of recycling that this government does.

We have had an improved Belconnen High School on the list for one election campaign and at least three budgets, and it has still not been completed. We have had Mount Stromlo high on the list for a new roof for two budgets. Claims of "better schools for Gungahlin" are, frankly, code for, "We massively underestimated what was needed in this area and our schools are seriously over capacity."

This year's education spend is obviously targeted at an election, with something for every electorate. I am not suggesting that money spent on any school is not money

well spent—it absolutely is—but you have to question the timing and the urgency of some of this year’s initiatives.

I am delighted that Calwell High School is on the list for new library and science facilities, but when it is at less than 50 per cent capacity, and with projected declining enrolments in the next few years, where is the prioritisation when a primary school in Garran, with overcrowding going back several years, receives nothing? Well, almost nothing; I have to acknowledge the rather late and limited effort or afterthought of the current education minister, who, clearly with one eye on the election, offers a temporary 18-month hire of one demountable classroom. If ever there was a case of too little too late, this is it—just like the efforts to show the parents at Telopea school that in the education minister they have a minister and a local member who cares. They know he does not. They know he did little of any real substance to protect their school from takeover. To this day, they do not believe him or the Chief Minister with any promise they make about the school, about MOCCA’s relocation to their oval, or indeed about any redevelopment of Manuka Oval that does not take the school’s oval for car parking or some other purpose.

As the second largest directorate in terms of spending, the Education portfolio has not been well treated in terms of ministerial stability, with three ministers since the last election. I have been asked many times since Mr Rattenbury’s appointment why the government chose to give its second-highest spending portfolio, and one of enormous importance to the future of Canberra, to a Greens minister instead of one from its own party. The alternatives suggested by those same people are that either Labor know that there have been so many mistakes in the education portfolio that they wanted the Greens to wear the blame and explain away the failings—like Manuka, like the boy in the cage, like MOCCA, like Garran, like the leaking roofs—or that they simply did not have anyone else capable of taking it on. Either way, education is the big loser.

At election time, Labor is always full of grand plans and great promises that go nowhere and rarely get to the pages of any budget. I have mentioned Belconnen High, which has had several appearances in successive budget papers, with little to show for it other than a shrinking amount of money.

Caroline Chisholm School’s \$9 million centre of excellence was promised by Chief Minister Katy Gallagher in 2012 for delivery in 2014-15. When Minister Burch fronted up to the school to announce this grand project in June 2015, it had somehow lost a few million along the way and was a \$6 million commitment to be ready by 2018. In this year’s budget, it is a mere one-line budget adjustment, with \$180,000 now moved into the 2016-17 year. Strange, then, that Ms Burch had told the school only a year ago that work was to start this year. I look forward to seeing the 2012 election commitment recycled this year.

Hopefully, Mount Stromlo’s roof might have better luck.

Who can forget the \$70 million in new moneys that were another 2012 election commitment intended for older school upgrades? It followed pressure from schools and from the Australian Education Union about smelly toilets, leaking roofs and freezing and/or boiling classrooms.

It took a while for the various education ministers to spin the right concoction, but the latest version as to whether the government has delivered on this commitment is, if you add up absolutely everything in the last four years that could vaguely be argued as maintenance, upgrade or similar, that they manage to get over the line. The only problem is that the \$70 million was sold as new money; that means over and above the regular annual allocation.

You only have to see the overcrowded classrooms in Garran, with 37 students in a class, the peeling paint or the smelly and ancient toilet blocks in several of our schools, without looking at the projected enrolments at a dozen or more schools that are bursting at the seams, to know that education has been neglected.

What does this government do about it? How does it try to defend its record of refusing to expand Franklin Early Childhood School, or plan to address Harrison School's capacity issues? It does not.

The Chief Minister resorts to the ALP election scare tactics manual and he came out with a blinder of a media release yesterday. I am not sure what he was drinking at the time he decided to come up with this doozy, but obviously it was something stronger than \$3 sparkling water from a city restaurant—

Mr Gentleman: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Gentleman?

MR DOSZPOT: You are awake, Mick?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is a point of order.

Mr Gentleman: The reflections on the minister in this place are completely unparliamentary.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just a moment, Mr Gentleman. There is a point of order. You have been in this place long enough, Mr Doszpot, to know you take your seat when there is a point of order.

MR DOSZPOT: I am amazed that Mr Gentleman was awake.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Gentleman, a point of order?

Mr Gentleman: There is a reflection in the interjection as well, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is completely inappropriate to reflect on people in this place, and I ask that he withdraw that comment.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order upheld. You withdraw. You implied—

MR DOSZPOT: Which comment are you referring to?

Mr Rattenbury interjecting—

MR DOSZPOT: Is he the Speaker or—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Doszpot, your words were that you did not know what the Chief Minister was drinking.

MR DOSZPOT: Why is that—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is an imputation on his character and I ask you to withdraw.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay; I will withdraw, Madam Deputy Speaker.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR DOSZPOT: So among—

Mr Rattenbury interjecting—

MR DOSZPOT: Is he allowed to keep interjecting, Madam Deputy Speaker?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Fair cop. Everyone else gets it, Mr Doszpot. Please continue.

MR DOSZPOT: Fair cop? Well, he seems to get away with more than normal.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are not reflecting on the chair's decision, are you, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Beg your pardon?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are not making an inference about the Speaker's decision, are you, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: I would not dream of it.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Continue.

MR DOSZPOT: I am not sure where the Chief Minister got the idea from, but he was obviously drinking \$3 sparkling water from the city restaurant that he keeps talking about so often. Among other figures plucked from somewhere that has not seen the light of day for many a year, he suggests—let me quote, because it is so out there—the following:

More than 530 education staff will be sacked, so hundreds of teachers will be torn from our classrooms. And with the ACT Government funding non-government schools, the Liberals' cuts will be felt in Catholic and independent school classrooms too.

I have heard of some wacky statements from this man, but this must beat them all. Having complained about the state of our schools consistently for eight years and how we need to do more, does he seriously think anyone would believe such a strategy from the opposition?

I note that the front page of today's *Canberra Times* also thinks it is rubbish, with a heading "Labor job cuts flawed". Enough said on that. The ACT spends more per capita on student public education than any other jurisdiction, but, despite that, we have year 6 classes with 37 students in what is regarded as a high performing primary school. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

We have for years, and under successive education ministers, seen the predictable skiting about how well our ACT students are doing in NAPLAN testing, despite my warning, on just as regular a basis, that we need to ensure that we are not leaving students behind and also that, on international PISA scales, we are slipping. Last week we saw that NAPLAN results for students across Australia, and most notably in the ACT, have flat-lined. Despite having record high levels of investment in education and a jurisdiction that spends more per head than any other, our results are slowing. Has Labor got its priorities right? We believe not.

In this year's budget we saw a measly \$300,000 over three years in teacher scholarships to support postgraduate learning and additional teacher expertise in science, technology, engineering and maths, the so-called STEM subjects that this government claim they are big supporters of and investors in. I suggest that the scholarships are too little and too late.

While the Labor mantra of "more money fixes all education ills" is clearly wrong, so, too, is targeting well-researched weaknesses in learning outcomes with token amounts of teacher training. We have some inspirational teachers taking different approaches with great success. We need to look at those models and better understand why they are working.

I note in this month's *ACT Educator* magazine an article about Campbell High's teacher coaching program. It is those sorts of approaches, rather than just promises of more money for projects that never seem to arrive, that will make a difference in our schools. And if those teachers are able to work in well-ventilated and temperature-controlled classrooms that are fit for purpose, with sensible class sizes, supported and encouraged to try new things and to undertake more learning, we will be on the right path.

This budget is ill targeted and full of catch-up dribbles of money going to projects that, if they had merit, should have been funded within the current government cycle and not drawn out into another funding year.

This year's education budget is full of promises to, conveniently, every electorate. But, if Labor is returned to government, how many will really see the light of day? If the 2012 election is any guide, few, if any—and none will be completed before the end of the next term.

The families of Canberra are waking up. The electors of Molonglo have already woken up to the trickeries of ministers Barr and Rattenbury. They know that building light rail comes at a cost, and education is just one of those areas that are paying the price—along with neglected trees, dangerous footpaths and long hospital waiting lists. Falling down schools and overcrowded, hot classrooms should not be the cost of a tram.

In October there is a choice, a very clear choice. We want to invest in education. We want to ensure that our schools are safe and pleasant places to be and that teachers feel appreciated, respected and supported to try new ways. We want parents to feel they are an important link with and to their child's schooling. Above all, we want to ensure that all schools in the ACT are for all students, able to offer an education that parents want for their children.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (8.36): I will speak very briefly today about child care, which plays such an important role for children in our community. It lays the foundations for development and learning and provides key opportunities for children's development and social engagement. I know that affordability remains a concern for many parents as childcare costs come on top of other cost of living pressures for everyday Canberra families. I am looking forward to seeing the outcome of the education and care services annual compliance audit which is listed as an accountability indicator in this year's education budget statement.

I would also like to refer briefly to a *Canberra Times* article of 6 May, where it was reported that local operators fear there may now be too many childcare places in at least some areas of the ACT. That article from the *Canberra Times* reported that the Fyshwick Early Childhood Centre, run by Community Services #1, formerly known as Southside Community Services, was to close at the end of June this year. A letter emailed to parents said the centre could not be maintained in its current financial position. Community Services #1 chief executive, Amanda Tobler, said that the closure was due to a gradual fall in numbers that could not be sustained.

This raises the issue of whether it is feasible or a good idea for the ACT government to consider supply and demand for new childcare centres when assessing development applications. It is quite a vexed question, I understand, because the Planning and Land Authority does not look at economic demand when assessing a development proposal for new childcare centres. It is something that, increasingly, existing childcare centres talk to me about. I understand there is not a simple answer.

It is perhaps worth looking at whether there should be a more strategic approach to development proposals for new childcare centres. Many childcare centre operators tell me that new centres are being proposed in areas where there are already a number of vacancies. However, it is a balance between the business opportunities that are afforded by child care, because it is generally approached as a business, versus some kind of interference in the system, which is not necessarily a good thing at all. It is something that I think we should all keep a watching brief on.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (8.38): This is a particularly significant area of government. Behind health, it is effectively the biggest investment in the budget. From my point of view, behind health, there can be no more important service that the government provides than the education of our children. It is clear that there is more that needs to be done and, as is said often, it is not just about the money; it is the matter of how that money is spent and where it is directed within our system.

I would note at the outset, and I made this point when Mr Rattenbury was appointed—it is actually not a criticism of Mr Rattenbury, I am sure he will be glad to hear—that I think it is extraordinary that a Labor government would decide to pass the portfolio of education to the Greens. I find it remarkable. It just shows how far this Labor government has drifted from core Labor values that it would decide that it is more important to give, as it did, Ms Fitzharris responsibilities for the tram, a light rail system, and Mr Rattenbury carriage of education. It is just extraordinary and it says so much about what is wrong with this government in terms of its priorities, its focus and how far it has drifted from its core values.

There are the reflections of others. I note that Mr Stanhope has described Mr Rattenbury as a loyal member of the Labor cabinet. He seems to have become very close to the Labor Party, so close that maybe those inside that cabinet cannot tell the difference. But I certainly know from teachers I have spoken to, people in the—

Mr Doszpot: A new deputy leader.

MR HANSON: A new deputy leader perhaps. Perhaps that is the solution. Certainly people I have spoken to were disappointed—this is Labor people I am talking about—that Labor did not think education was sufficiently important to hold that close to the Labor government.

It is an extraordinarily important area of government. That is why in my budget reply, which now seems quite some time ago, I announced that we were going to make a significant investment in education should we get into government in October. It is an \$85 million package. It will make a real difference across our school system, both non-government and government. There are three broad components to what we have announced. There is \$60 million in extra support for infrastructure. I know that Mr Doszpot, who has visited every school at least once, understands these issues intimately. A lot of our schools are run down and over capacity.

A lot of this stems from two things. Firstly, Mr Barr shut 23 Canberra public schools after this government said it would not. It went into the election in 2004 promising not to close any schools. After the election, when Mr Barr became education minister, he shut 23. It is ironic that we have had the criticism this week, the fake criticism, the scare campaign, that somehow the Liberals are going to cut things. It was the Costello review, the functional review that was all about budgetary management, that led to this Labor government cutting 23 schools. Mr Barr was the person who cut them. As a result, our schools are overcrowded. Since that time our schools have not been maintained properly. Certainly we have heard many complaints from the education union about the failure to invest properly in our school facilities.

Ultimately, the people that lose out are students, kids in those schools, who are in suboptimal facilities, sometimes unsafe facilities. We have had several fires occurring in older, rundown schools. Our hardworking teachers deserve to be in facilities that are not dilapidated, rundown and overcrowded. We will provide \$60 million over a term of government to restore some of the damage that has been done by this government.

A second element is supporting kids with special needs in non-government schools. There was money in the budget for kids in government schools. There is a lot of money going towards kids with special needs in the public school system. And we support that; we absolutely support that. We want to make sure that we are looking after those kids that need extra help. I think that as a community, as a society, that is an absolute core responsibility. But there are a lot of kids, as we know, in non-government schools that are not receiving any support.

That has a number of possible implications. Either those kids stay where they are and do not get the support that potentially they deserve or, and this often happens, the parents move children with special needs across to the public system where they will get the support. The problem with that is that the kid is not necessarily in the school that is the first choice of the parents and, secondly, it just puts more pressure, increased pressure, on the public school system, which is not a good thing. So there is \$17.5 million across the term, \$5 million a year, which will provide significant support to those kids and go some way to implementing the recommendations from the Shaddock review.

The final element is \$7.5 million in support for our specialised schools. These are the kids that are doing it the toughest, with some of the more profound special needs. We have allocated \$7.5 million, a mix of extra ongoing money and capital, so that those schools, in consultation with the directorate, can upgrade facilities, provide new equipment and provide support for kids with profound special needs.

I am very proud of that announcement. I think it is an excellent one. I commend Mr Doszpot and Mr Wall, who also did a lot of work in his role as shadow minister for disabilities, for putting that announcement together. It is the sort of response that you will see from us as Canberra Liberals, the point being that, if we are not spending the enormous amounts of money that are going to be spent on not just phase 1 of the tram, which is \$1.78 billion, but the phases to come—and the government has said it is going to announce phase 2 before the election—these are the priorities you can invest in. I would suggest that the maintenance and capacity of our schools, our special needs kids in our specialised schools and our special needs kids in the non-government sector should be a higher priority than a tram.

I find it extraordinary that the government would choose to criticise the Canberra Liberals—falsely, as it turns out, if you read the front page of the *Canberra Times*, as Mr Doszpot alluded to before—for having announced funding for disabled kids. Extra funding for disabled kids is what that mob opposite have criticised us for. Extra money to maintain our schools, our dilapidated schools, is what they have criticised us for, and they think somehow that is a job cut. It is a bizarre world we are living in

when a Labor government give the portfolio of education to somebody who is not in the Labor Party. Then when someone announces more money for helping our disabled kids in our schools they are criticised for doing so. That is, I think, reflective of just how far the government have drifted from their core Labor values. You are on a tram to nowhere.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Education, Minister for Justice and Consumer Affairs and Minister for Road Safety) (8.48): I am pleased to speak to this year's education budget. The government through this budget has chosen to invest in five key areas, each linked to improving student outcomes through quality learning, inspirational teaching and leadership, setting high expectations for high performance, connecting with families and school communities, and driving business improvements and innovation in education.

Right across the ACT public schooling system we are getting a growing number of students in our schools. The census showed a 14.9 per cent increase in the past five years. To me this a reflector of what the community thinks of public schooling; they know public schooling in the ACT is a good outcome. Parents are choosing to enrol their children in a public school, safe in the knowledge that they will receive a high quality education from kindergarten right through to college.

One of the key things in this budget is implementation of the schools for all program. The government is responding to all 40 recommendations of the schools for all report with \$7.267 million in 2016-17 and a total of nearly \$22 million over four years. Some of this initiative is partially funded from within existing resources in education, as I have made clear. But this is not just about delivering the 50 recommendations in the report; it is also about the cultural change. That is why this program is set down to take place over three years to give time to both delivering those 50 recommendations and to embed them in a way that drives a serious cultural change in our education system so that the spirit of that report is delivered as well as the specifics.

The schools for all funding will strengthen the capacity of schools to support students and their families, through an additional 26 full-time allied health positions. This initiative delivers services, training and resources to support long-term educational outcomes for students with complex needs and challenging behaviours, as well as assessment and intervention for students with developmental delays and disabilities. We are bringing on four additional social workers and four additional senior psychologists to respond through the network student engagement teams in an acknowledgement of the concerns raised by teachers and principals that they are concerned about student wellbeing and mental health issues in their schools.

Combining this with a more efficient referral and case management system should serve to address some of these concerns. The directorate will continue to keep a close eye on this over the next year to see what progress we are making. I think these are important steps, and we need to keep looking at whether they are delivering the outcomes aspired to, whether more effort needs to be put in and whether it is addressing some of the gaps that are there.

The schools for all funding also includes additional funding for improving, upgrading and building safe sensory spaces at schools—\$1.7 million over four years to roll out the positive behaviour support program across all schools, and \$760,000 over four years for training and scholarships to build professional expertise in managing students with complex needs and challenging behaviours. That is why I think this funding is a strong start to meeting some of the challenges that lie before us in this area.

I note the comment Mr Doszpot made about the non-government schools being overlooked. This is a myth that is important to address in tonight's discussion while we reflect on this year's budget. Under this year's national education reform agreement, non-government schools in the ACT have received a six per cent increase in funding, or \$15 million. Within that, the Catholic education system has received \$11 million in additional funding, or a 7.7 per cent increase in their funding.

The question that remains then is: given that significant additional funding those schools are receiving, will they allocate some of that to addressing the schools for all recommendations? I can assure the Assembly that the government is working very closely with the non-government sectors to implement schools for all. We know we cannot just deliver this in government schools; we have to deliver it right across the schooling sector in the ACT, and we are doing that. There is a series of points of collaboration—and I reported on that to the Assembly last week—where the three schooling systems are working on a number of things together.

The program board is comprised of the Catholic education system, the public school system through the directorate and the Association of Independent Schools. A series of resources is being shared and intellectual work and knowledge is being shared. That is in all directions; the directorate does not have exclusively the best knowledge on this. Great progress is being made in the non-government sector as well. I am really pleased with that collaboration.

What was announced in the budget was the government's response in the government school system. That is what the government is supposed to do, and the budget is about where the government is spending its money. As I have outlined, the non-government schools received a considerable boost in funding this year under the national education reform agreement. I guess the question Mr Doszpot and parents need to ask if they have concerns about this is: how much of that additional funding are those schools allocating to their schools for all implementation? That is what the government system has done: it has used its additional funding through that process to prioritise some of this work.

This goes to the additional funding that Mr Hanson has just talked about. It is not clear to me—and this is a question Mr Hanson and Mr Doszpot and the Liberal Party will need to answer during the election campaign—whether the additional money they are proposing to allocate to the non-government system is funded through the increases in the national education reform agreement, or NERA, funding? Are they pre-allocating that, or is it additional money on top of it? If they are pre-allocating it,

they are actually stepping in and starting to dictate to the non-government schools how they are going to spend their money.

That is not something that I have chosen to do; it is not something the Chief Minister has chosen to do. I will be interested to understand exactly how the Liberal Party are approaching that question, and I hope they spell it out. They will be obliged to at the various education election fora along the way. When both sectors have raised this question with me, I have said to them that the government could dictate how they should spend their money, but we choose not to do that. In the system we have in the ACT there is an acknowledgement that the non-government systems have a freedom to spend their money as they see fit. That is the practice that has developed over time. If there is to be a change to that, people need to be up-front and honest about it.

In terms of infrastructure, this budget allocates funding to improve learning environments across Canberra, including money for better schools for Belconnen with the expansion of preschool facilities in Weetangara and Hawker and contemporary learning spaces at Maribyrnong Primary School. In Tuggeranong we will see upgraded library and science laboratories at Calwell high, improved parking and traffic management at Wanniasa Hills primary and food technology facility upgrades at Lake Tuggeranong College. In Woden we will see a replacement roof at Mount Stromlo high as part of the roof replacement program, and in our inner suburbs we will see new facilities at Alfred Deakin and Campbell high schools and upgraded science facilities at Dickson College. Right across the city we are seeing allocation to schools as we continually update.

We know some of our schools are getting older. A significant program needs to be rolled out to continue to keep our school learning spaces up to date and to the standards our community expects. This year sees a significant investment in Gungahlin. In the last five years in Gungahlin there has been a 44.8 per cent increase in the population, and this is obviously putting significant pressure on our schools in the area. In response, in the 2016-17 budget the government is investing \$20 million for the expansion of Gungahlin schools. This will provide capacity for the growing student numbers and provide enormous economic and social benefit to the Gungahlin community. The government has planned this growth, which will increase student places by 680 in the region. This funding, of course, is in addition to the \$28.6 million allocated in the 2015-16 budget to build a new primary school in the north Gungahlin suburb of Taylor, ready for the 2019 school year.

The \$20 million allocated in this budget provides Amaroo School with 12 new learning spaces to cater for 300 secondary students, an expanded gym to accommodate more students and allow for additional community uses, and installation of new hard courts. Harrison School will see the installation of eight new learning spaces for 200 primary and middle school students, and the Neville Bonner and Palmerston primary schools will see new and expanded primary and preschool facilities.

Turning to issues of information and technology, the ACT schooling system has excellent information and technology particularly through our Google schools apps and the rollout of Chromebooks across our city. It is really pleasing to see Google

using the ACT education system as a case study internationally. They are producing videos and telling to a global audience the story of the success of the rollout of IT in ACT schools. That is something this jurisdiction can be very proud of.

When it comes to this year's budget, the IT upgrade for school administration is a significant investment, providing \$10 million over the next four years. This will provide for the development of a modern, fully integrated school business system that will streamline parents' interactions with schools and provide more efficient administration for our staff. This has been welcomed by parents because it is important for ACT public schools to keep up to date with modern families and enable parents to easily engage with their children's school through technology. As it was quipped at the time, this should mean the end of the lost note at the bottom of the school bag and a greater ability for parents to interact on a range of important matters relating to their child, through their device—their iPad, their desktop computer, whatever their chosen means is. It will streamline parent interaction with schools and provide improved and more efficient administration.

This system, when it is delivered, will provide an enhanced online enrolment experience so that parents need to tell their story only once. It will provide functionality for additional digital transactions, including permissions, consent, payments, and updating of student details, reducing the number of paper forms between home and school and reducing the need for repetition of forms or information.

There will be online attendance marking and faster absence notification to parents and guardians. We will see a greater rollout of digital student academic reports and, of course, improved administrative efficiency for schools through automated workflows, including financial reporting, board reports, student wellbeing, payments and receipts, and asset management. All of this means more convenience for parents and better use of the valuable resources in our schooling system, less time on administration, and more time to do other things.

The government is also investing \$400,000 in 2016-17 to upgrade the current Board of Senior Secondary Studies grade moderation system. This upgrade will ensure ongoing quality of student grading and provide schools with more efficient access to data. When I met with the BSSS recently they were very upbeat about this and see real opportunity for continuing the great reputation of the ACT's college system, of which this is an important part.

While I am on the issue of infrastructure and the like, I noted Mr Doszpot's comments this evening on Garran Primary School and his sense that this is some sort of half-baked solution. In fact, this is a very strategic solution. In all his commentary on this in recent times, Mr Doszpot is studiously ignoring the fact that the projections for the student population of Garran Primary School are for it to peak in the next couple of years and then dip. This is a reflection of the change in priority enrolment area.

The government is working actively with the school to manage their population, and that is why we believe that, with other improvements in the school, there will be capacity at Garran over time as that population comes down. In the meantime, additional capacity has been provided through the provision of transportable

classrooms. The government will continue to monitor that situation and work with the Garran community, as I have done since I came to the portfolio.

Similarly, I thought the comments on Telopea could most generously be described as churlish. I assure the house that, when it comes to the Telopea school ovals, the lease for the tennis courts and Montgomery Oval has been returned to the Education Directorate. It is a 99-year lease because the lease had to be reissued. I have worked through that process, and I can assure the house, as I have written to the school community, that a new 99-year lease for that site now sits back with the Education Directorate. That is where it should sit, and that should give the school assurance that I as the minister see that as a very important part of the school's facilities. I see no plans for any other use for it other than with the school.

In terms of other areas, I will briefly touch on the issue of domestic violence, because this has a very significant impact in our schools. The government is taking a holistic approach to respond to it. Through this budget the ACT government will support ACT public schools to continue to deliver a system-wide school program to effectively and sensitively assess students dealing with the impacts of trauma. Some \$100,000 has been set aside to respond to this important initiative in an education context in the 2016-17 budget. This forms part of a broader package in response to domestic and family violence. Given there is an impact in our schools, I think this is an important focus.

In terms of other matters, I welcome Ms Lawder's comments on the issue of early childhood education and care, particularly the discussion around there being too many places. The closure of the facility at Fyshwick raises questions about capacity in the ACT. I have commissioned a piece of work by the Education Directorate to look at these issues. Shortly after the closure of the Fyshwick centre I convened a stakeholder meeting at the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning to which quite a few stakeholders in the industry came. The government presented the initial research that had been done to peer test it with the stakeholders in the area.

There is quite some discussion about capacity. There is a sense that, as you touched on in your comments, Madam Assistant Speaker, there seems to be an uneven distribution of capacity across the system. I am raising this with my colleagues in the cabinet process because we need to look at this in a whole-of-government way to ensure we are managing capacity. We are in a situation where this market has developed essentially as a very significant free market; there has been limited government intervention. Although there has been a deliberate effort in recent years to release more sites, I think we need to think carefully how government strategically intervenes to ensure stable provision of services. We do not want to see services going bust, but we must do that in a way that does not unnecessarily curb the capacity for new centres to arise where there is demand. I welcome the conversation on that. More thinking needs to be done in that space and I can let the Assembly know that the directorate is continuing to work on that for me and that I will be taking that discussion further with my cabinet colleagues. It is one that, no doubt, the next Assembly will need to contemplate as well.

I will leave my remarks there on the education sector. This coming year is an exciting one for the ACT. We have challenges; certainly the implementation of schools for all requires considerable ongoing effort. I said recently when I released the second quarterly report that I think we are making determined process. We are seeing acceleration of the work in that space, but we certainly must not rest in seeking to implement the outcomes of that report.

Our recent NAPLAN results indicate that we need to look carefully at that data to look into the ACT schooling results. I am reluctant to make broad, sweeping conclusions off those numbers. As I said at the time, we need to drill down into the data because across our school system there are different results; some schools are doing extremely well whilst there are others where we need to look closely at what further efforts we can make to improve performance.

I believe we have many of the right tools in place. There is a commitment in the directorate to pursuing excellence. There is a commitment to working with our staff right across the system—both in the directorate and at the coalface in the schools—to continually raise our standards. That is something I am committed to as minister. I look forward to continuing to update the Assembly on the progress we are making so that the ACT continues to have an outstanding schooling system.

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (9.07): I want to speak very briefly on two recommendations in the report. One is a recommendation around innovative funding models that allows consideration for the non-government sector to grow their sites and to grow their schools. The government's response has recognised this by agreeing in principle, and I think that recognises that 30 per cent of our school population is in the non-government sector, so it is an important sector for Canberra families.

We recognise that \$65 million goes to the non-government school sector. That provides support for their operational costs, including capital costs. What is pleasing in the government's response to recommendation 14, which I note is that, in addition to the \$65 million of funding, the government provides \$1.3 million to non-government schools to establish and to upgrade preschool facilities and provides land at no cost to non-government schools. The pleasing point in this sentence in the report is that that \$1.3 million is ongoing support to non-government schools to upgrade their preschool facilities. I am sure that would be welcomed by many families across Canberra that seek to put their little ones in preschool.

The other recommendation looks at how we work with the non-government sector to facilitate long-term land release. The minister has gone to great lengths today and at other times in the Assembly to explain the level of forward thinking that is required in planning for government schools, but the non-government sector also need to have that longer term horizon in their planning, and land release is an important aspect of that.

The recommendation is for working with the ACT government, working with the non-government school sector, to facilitate long-term land release in future school planning. The government's response has agreed. It has stated that the government is

working on improvements to processes associated with the provision of land for the new non-government school sector, and it talks about an expression of interest process that will make sure that that distribution of land is equitable and fair.

My only comment on this is that, whilst I am very pleased that this is agreed by the government, this working on improvements to processes has been a long time in coming, and I would encourage all sides of that discussion to really knuckle down and get on with it. You need at least a five-year horizon to plan for a new school. That means that, to have a new non-government school in any of the greenfield sites, the land needs to be acquired now so we can have kids in that school in five to six or 10 years time.

It is an important element of service provision for our growing city. I am pleased that it is recognised and agreed by the government. I will be watching with interest to make sure that there is no further delay and that a good, solid land release program for non-government schools is facilitated.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Environment and Planning Directorate—Schedule 1, Part 1.9

MR COE (Ginninderra) (9.11): The ACT planning system is in need of reform. Unfortunately, this government keeps making it worse.

The lack of consultation with industry and the community in this space is becoming emblematic of this government's approach to governing. Whether it is a change to legislation, a major project or a change to the territory plan, it seems that with pretty much every major decision the government take, they refuse to actually listen to the people it will affect.

In March this year, one such example arose when Minister Gentleman announced that the government was considering expanding development to west Tuggeranong next to the Murrumbidgee River. Plans had supposedly been developed for a suburb called Thompson. However, the government actually had not done much research—it pretty much had not done any research. It was, in effect, just a media release. Since announcing the proposed development, the government has encountered pretty strong community opposition. Perhaps, if the government had been open with the community about its plans from the very beginning, we would not be in this situation.

Madam Assistant Speaker Lawder, as I know you are very much aware, there is a need to get more people in and around the Tuggeranong town centre, but it has to be the right development at the right time. Unfortunately, when you try to do planning by way of a media release with nothing backing it up, you get into problems.

Another such example is the government's attitude to the territory plan variation for Red Hill, draft variation 334. The government proposed to allow buildings of up to six storeys in the middle of an established suburb. The proposal would have been entirely out of place. The community was strongly opposed to such high density development, and a large number of submissions were made by the community in response to the

proposal. It was a cash grab. It really had nothing to do with planning; it had nothing to do with what was actually the best outcome for the city. It was simply a cash grab. The government refused to listen to the community and the experts—until the Canberra Liberals announced an alternative proposal for the area. After much pressure from the community, and having this clear alternative on the table, the government finally agreed to lower the height limit for the area. However, huge amounts of time and energy were wasted in trying to make the government see sense. And even this revision has its problems. There are still many questions and a distinct lack of clarity about exactly what will and will not be allowed.

The government's attitude to these local communities, and indeed all local communities, is wrong. Instead of consulting and working with the community, the government constantly tries to impose changes that the community does not want. We see the gamesmanship of this government. We see it deliberately go for more apartments or more units and then revise it down slightly and expect to be thanked. That is no way to do planning policy. The people of Canberra deserve more respect.

The government has a habit of making unfair changes to our planning system. The territory plan variation for Mr Fluffy blocks was one such example. The government made changes to the rules that were unfair. They created an uneven playing field. The Mr Fluffy variation imposed a different set of planning rules for Mr Fluffy blocks. Seven hundred or so blocks were given additional rights over every other block in Canberra that had the same criteria. We think that is simply wrong. As one person said at the committee inquiry, it was planning being done by throwing darts at a map of Canberra. That, of course, is not good governance.

The government's solar access rules continue to lead to more expensive houses that are poorly designed. We are not getting the best outcome as a result of variation 306. And, although the government has put in variation 346—years late, I might add—and it does improve the situation for new suburbs, it has created confusion. The government does not have the confidence to go ahead and make the necessary planning change for other parts of Canberra.

Although the variation 346 changes are a welcome improvement, the government should have worked up a solution that was applicable right across Canberra. It is not good enough to create yet more inequality in our planning system. It is totally unfair to choose the zoning of a block based on the type of insulation that was installed in a former house on that block. It is totally unreasonable to have a situation whereby so many houses in Canberra have in effect been stripped of their property rights, their development rights, because of variation 306. It is leading to worse solar outcomes. It is leading to blocks positioned at the northern end rather than the southern end. Because of that, we are seeing yards in the south rather than yards in the north. We are seeing suburbs that are being deliberately designed to minimise the shadow. In effect, we have many houses in Moncrieff, as one particular example, where all that is facing north is a garage, a front door and a front window. Very little sunlight is actually going to go into that house—and that is an intergenerational problem; it will be there forever. Rather, houses should be positioned east-west, with the longest side of the house and the living spaces facing north, therefore being able to capture more sunlight.

In the last year we also saw the government make changes to the territory plan and in legislation to allow the University of Canberra to develop land for its own purposes for residential use. The government's decision to allow the UC to operate under a different set of planning rules from other areas in the ACT is yet another example of inequality. It is yet another example whereby we are going to have a two-track planning system in Canberra. And what has been done at the University of Canberra risks undermining the property market in the Belconnen district in particular.

The Mr Fluffy variation, the UC variation and the latest solar access variation are just making the territory plan more complicated. There is no doubt that the territory plan is in need of a complete review, and that is exactly what the Canberra Liberals will do if we are elected to government.

It is unacceptable that the plan has become so complicated that only absolute experts either in the agency or in business understand it. It is unacceptable that people who want to do the right thing and comply with the territory plan can struggle to navigate it because it is just so complicated. It is a document that is well over 2,000 pages—in addition to the Planning and Development Act, in addition to the building code, in addition to all the other rules and regulations. It is just so hard to operate in business in this space. I also feel for the planning assessors that have to work under this regulation. It must be so difficult to make a fair assessment of plans that come before you when you have to make them comply with not only the building code but also 2,000-odd pages of territory plan.

Earlier this year we were pleased to support the government's planning and development efficiencies bill, which simplified the planning process for complicated developments. The fact that the government brought this bill on shows that even they are aware that this planning process is a mess. After 15 years, the government have to in effect wind back many of the changes that they have brought in. But they have not wound back enough.

The Canberra Liberals have committed to a complete review of the territory plan. We want a planning system that is characterised by certainty, simplicity and equity. The way to achieve this is not through constant tinkering around the edges.

The government's land release program is simply not working. The cost of land in the ACT is significantly more expensive than that of land across the border, as I said earlier in the debate about the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. It is disappointing to hear that Canberrans are choosing to move across the border to find cheaper land in New South Wales. It is a problem that we are going to suffer from for many years. These are people that should be making their home in the ACT. These are people that we should be welcoming or encouraging to stay within the territory. Instead, they are choosing to go across the border where they can get affordable land.

This year I was very pleased to introduce a bill to allow unit owners to install their own water meter. It was a straightforward bill I consulted with many constituents and stakeholders about. The bill would have encouraged water conservation as well as

being fairer for all unit owners. The government and Mr Rattenbury showed that they do not care about water conservation and they do not care about fairer water bills. They simply voted the bill down. If they thought it had merit, they could have moved amendments. They have all the powers and all the resources of government to do that, but they chose not to, which can only suggest that they do not support the principle of water conservation and fairer water bills for all. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

In conclusion, I will discuss the heritage portfolio, which is a small part of the environment and planning budget, with less than \$2 million allocated in the coming year. Unfortunately, the size of the heritage budget is a concern. We would all like to see a larger heritage budget, but there are, of course, many constraints on government that may make it difficult to allocate more. However, time and time again we have seen heritage considerations sidelined when the government wants to go ahead with its own pet project. We know that there are many developers or proponents that have struggled with heritage requirements. Meanwhile, there is a government project on the table and heritage requirements seem to get brushed aside.

Despite being a relatively young city, Canberra has a rich history which should be preserved, not just for Canberrans now or for Canberrans in the future but also for the nation as a whole. As the seat of government in the nation's capital, we have access to the major national institutions, but we should not forget about our local heritage and our local history.

As I have said on many occasions, the ACT planning system is in major need of reform. It is time for the government to commit to such a change, which would be of benefit to all concerned with the planning system in the ACT.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Racing and Gaming and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (9.23): Planning in the territory is one of the most important elements in government. As this budget shows, the ACT government has committed over \$66.6 million to planning and land management activities in the territory. This investment not only allows the ACT to continue its reputation as one of the world's most livable cities but also shows that we are able to be responsive to the challenges of a growing and diverse city. I have spoken previously in this place about my commitment to having a dynamic outcomes-focused planning system in the ACT that balances the needs of our city and those who live in it.

The statement of planning intent clearly details my vision, as minister, for a city renowned not only for its livability but its vibrant and distinctive lifestyle. The statement establishes four key priorities for achieving this: creating sustainable, compact and livable neighbourhoods with better transport choices; delivering high quality public spaces and streets through place-making; delivering an outcome-focused planning system to reward design, excellence and innovation; and engaging with the community, business and research sectors to optimise planning outcomes. Through my engagement with the community I have seen a great level of enthusiasm for this vision.

The implementation of the actions listed in the statement will continue to be a priority for our government in 2016-17. I will continue to engage with local residents on what is important to them when planning for a Canberra of tomorrow. My statement of planning intent will continue to provide guidance over the coming five years as the government continues to revitalise areas such as the Tuggeranong Valley.

Earlier this year I led a delegation of ACT business and industry leaders to cities in the US and Canada. We visited sites in Tucson, Seattle, Portland and Vancouver. These cities showcased best practice urban design, transport planning and sustainable development. Of particular value for the ACT government and associated delegation members was the opportunity to see firsthand successful light rail outcomes. Because Canberra is transitioning from a regional city to a major metropolitan centre and is embarking on a period of significant urban renewal, the delegation visited examples of housing choices, planning for active travel, built form helping with climate change mitigation and adaptation, and transit-oriented development.

Following the delegation, the ACT government is working to share knowledge gained with the Canberra community. For example, Canadian urban planners from Vancouver, Mr Larry Beasley and Mr Gordon Harris, visited Canberra in April and during a series of workshops and public addresses during their visit Mr Beasley and Mr Harris shared their experiences on creating successful, sustainable cities. They were also impressed with the initiatives that the ACT has in place to deliver world-class planning outcomes.

I move on to point out that successful urban renewal also contributes to increased sustainability. Urban renewal sites often make better use of energy, water and transport infrastructure and create places and spaces that mitigate or adapt to the effects of climate change in our region. Renewing the territory's suburbs to ensure their contribution to Canberra's urban renewal program is a key priority for government and I am pleased to say that we are currently having valuable conversations with the local community about how Tuggeranong could grow over the coming decades, including a dedicated community panel. The community panel will look at whether a viable, sustainable and equitable development is possible in western Greenway. This will help inform any decision taken by government, ensuring the decision is the right one for the environment and, of course, the community.

While remaining focused on renewing Tuggeranong to allow new opportunities and to breathe new life into the town centre, this is yet another example of how this government is driving the growth and prosperity of Canberra. I look forward to the outcomes of the community panel and hearing what the Tuggeranong community want to say for the valley.

In continuing the conversation with our community, the government's new Your Say website provides people of all ages with the ability to interact with the planning process and contributes to a stronger Canberra into the future. I am pleased to see greater participation from the younger generation in the planning process since we have implemented these new consultation channels. As was evident during the development of my statement of planning intent, getting views from a broad

cross-section of the Canberra community enables our government to make informed decisions which benefit all. This whole-of-government platform enables further use of new channels for our community's voice.

I have been extremely pleased to take on the responsibility for land management this year in addition to my planning responsibilities. This links directly with our capital upgrades program that will ensure that spaces for visitors and the community to enjoy the great outdoors are maintained. We are including the adaptive reuse of a number of cottages which are no longer used by our rangers. These cottages will be converted into short-stay retreats for visitors; another example of the new ways the government is investing in showcasing the amazing environment in which we live, as well as attracting visitors to our region to further support tourism.

We will be continuing to upgrade and renew our parks and heritage information signage as well. Upgrading this information and making heritage more accessible to the community will provide another opportunity for Canberrans to learn about our history, a subject which I am particularly passionate about and I hear Mr Coe is as well.

This year I am proud to report that we had another successful Canberra and Region Heritage Festival. The festival, which was held in April, had 160 events held over a two-week period and attracted over 20,000 people. The theme, discovery and rediscovery, allowed visitors to experience the extraordinary history of the territory. Understanding and conserving our rich history has always been an important consideration for this government. These events also showcase to Canberrans the connections that we have with our surrounding regions and the part this has played in developing our city.

Throughout the year the directorate dealt with a number of large and complex development applications such as the development of two new supermarkets at Dickson. The recent approval of this revised proposal highlights the value that the community has in shaping planning in the territory. While proposals such as this can take longer periods of time to work through, I strongly believe that the community want to see the right decisions made, and sometimes this can take additional time and resourcing to achieve.

The development application process in the last 12 months was able to deliver a number of improvements including an improved public realm with better design and architectural features and activated frontages to the street, more clarity around pedestrian and traffic movements for improved safety and a reduced number of loading doors to Antill Street which now ensures all truck movements are contained within the loading dock area and will not spill out onto the street. The Planning and Land Authority's decision included conditions of approval to further enhance the outcome, including further treatment of the north-eastern corridor, extending the proposed shared zone and a requirement for an electronic parking guidance and information system for basement parking.

Through the 2016-17 budget the ACT government will continue to provide resources and support to ensure that the development application processes are continuing to

deliver the best outcomes for our city and our community. In 2016-17 the master planning for our town and group centres will continue. Master plans in Kippax, Curtin, Belconnen and Calwell are almost finalised and have involved considerable consultation with the community and stakeholders.

Madam Assistant Speaker, as you know, master plans are an important element in protecting the elements of centres which the community cherish while allowing a clear vision for the future and the ongoing vibrancy of these important community assets. Past plans have been well received by the community and continue to be implemented through changes to the territory plan and development of capital infrastructure such as bike paths through the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate.

The government continuously seeks to ensure the building industry and the associated regulatory systems are operating effectively. The government's priority is to establish clear obligations and expectations for building practitioners and to build capacity in industry and within the regulatory system. The recent changes which have been passed will help reduce phoenixing and improve the Construction Occupations Registrar's ability to investigate and act on complaints and breaches of construction. This is just the start. We will continue work to reform the regulatory environment to protect customers as well as the vast majority in the construction industry who continue to deliver high quality projects.

Mr Coe talked about the territory plan. As custodians of the territory plan the ACT government will continue through 2016-17 to ensure that the plan continues to capture the visions for Canberra and encourages high quality planning outcomes.

A few of the territory plan variations include DV328, which incorporates the recommendations of the approved Oaks Estate master plan; DV329, which incorporates the recommendations of the approved Weston group centre master plan and proposes to amend the territory plan map and Weston precinct map and code. DV339 Kaleen proposes to rezone a site from the community facility zone, CFZ, to the RZ5 high-density residential zone and to insert provisions into the Kaleen precinct map and code to stipulate building heights across the site. DV349 is to implement the conditions of the EPBC approval for the development of the University of Canberra public hospital in Bruce and to incorporate offset sites in Watson into Canberra's nature reserve system.

Following feedback from stakeholders, careful consideration has been given to ensuring that the residential solar access provisions in the territory plan continue to protect the solar access and solar amenity of residential blocks, facilitate passive solar design and active solar technology and contribute to energy efficiency. The draft territory plan variation will allow more effective positioning of buildings on the block, enabling dwellings to take better advantage of solar access; increase opportunities for north-facing private open spaces; reduce less desirable open space to the south of dwellings; improve solar access to internal living areas; and reduce the need for excavation and earthworks. Once again this highlights this government's responsiveness to address community and industry concerns and develop solutions which benefit all.

As part of the 2016-17 budget the government will provide \$350,000 for an analysis of how the ACT government is able to upgrade the current authoritative spatial database also known as the SDMS. SDMS holds over 40 statutory-required datasets including the territory plan, the digital cadastral database, place names management and the geodetic framework. The new system will support the emerging national standards in true 3D and 4D structures and datum modernisation and electronic planning submissions, also significantly reducing the cost of future programs through partnerships with the New South Wales government. The upgrade will rapidly advance the territory to the forefront in this field, increasing the territory's and community's location intelligence which is an essential element in planning for future development.

Following consultation earlier this year, the government is committed to delivering a vision for Northbourne Avenue. Over 100 people completed the city and gateway survey. Overwhelmingly, people wanted to ensure that this iconic feature of the Canberra landscape is enhanced through the greater connectivity between various centres along the corridor. The community also wants innovative, sustainable building design which contributes to the wider precinct. These views will be incorporated into the final plan, which we hope to release in the coming year.

I am pleased to say that the ACT now has a single conservation agency as of 1 July this year. Parks and Conservation Services joined its conservation colleagues in the Environment and Planning Directorate. This has brought together the science, policy, research and on-ground environmental work in a single directorate, strengthening the connections between these functions. This arrangement comes with some impressive statistics. The single conservation agency now manages over 70 per cent of land in the ACT. It is responsible for the maintenance of over \$300 million in public assets, welcomes tens of thousands of people to the ACT's amazing nature reserves each year and is responsible for the conservation of a number of threatened species. Combined with this, the agency also has responsibility for biosecurity, fire management, nature conservation policy and supporting an impressive number of environmental volunteer groups.

From last month the ACT also took stewardship of the Australian Alps. This amazing stretch of land covers over 1.6 million hectares of public land from the Alpine national park in Victoria to the Namadgi national park right here in the territory. This is a fantastic opportunity for ACT Parks and Conservation to work with the unique natural, cultural and recreational features of the Australian Alps national parks region. An example of the alps program was recently highlighted by recent assistance the ACT provided to our New South Wales parks colleagues to undertake the detailed analysis of wild horse populations within the Kosciuszko national park. This work informed the development of the park's wild horse management plan which has direct relevance to our management of the Cotter catchment. The program, which rotates every three years, has proven to be hugely effective at not only managing this valuable resource but also strengthening ties between us, New South Wales and Victoria.

The ACT community is enormously proud of the amazing natural environment in which we live, and the community will also be pleased with the resources which have been committed to our nature reserves in this budget. As part of the 2016-17 budget, the government is providing \$5.193 million to establish and enhance new conservation areas in Gungahlin and the Jerrabomberra Valley in Canberra's south. These conservation areas are being established to offset environmental impacts from development. The offsets will include habitat for a range of threatened species including the golden sun moth and the striped legless lizard as well as the box gum woodland and natural temperate grasslands ecological communities in the ACT.

Also included in this year's budget is \$700,000 in additional funding to address invasive pests and weeds in the territory's nature parks, conservation areas and unleased rural lands. For the 2016-17 year, it means that this government will spend over \$2.1 million on weed management. Not only does this expenditure assist in reducing the damage caused by established invasive pests; it also makes sure that the incursions of new invasive weeds can be eradicated or contained before they spread. These programs have a huge value not just for the environment but also economically, as these weeds threaten our agricultural and tourism industries.

Protecting our precious river reserves will be a priority for government in 2016-17. The ACT government has committed over a million dollars to continue to develop the new 650-hectare Molonglo River reserve to increase its environmental conservation, recreation use and fire mitigation. The project involves reserve establishment, including weed removal, fire mitigation measures and rehabilitation of the riparian environment. As we know, as the ACT continues to expand, protecting as well as connecting these areas for the enjoyment of those around it is essential. This area in particular will attract significant amenity value to the 55,000 households which will call Molonglo home over the next 30 years.

Also included within the budget is \$702,000 to protect endangered ecological communities as well as the economic, environmental and social impacts of over-abundant eastern grey kangaroo populations. The research component of this funding includes monitoring work to ensure the impacts of kangaroo numbers on endangered grassy ecosystems and the calculation of numbers of kangaroos to be culled to maintain kangaroo populations at ecologically sustainable levels in identified sites.

2016-17 is the year of opportunity for Canberra. With the investment that this government has made over a number of years, we have developed a planning and land management system which is continually delivering outcomes for the territory. We all know that the ACT has an environment which we are committed to protecting, and it is a great place to live. The budget does not just preserve it; it enhances it as well.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I would also like to make some comments in regard to the environment portfolio on behalf of Minister Corbell. The ACT has a longstanding reputation as a world leader in addressing the challenges of climate change and cutting edge environmental initiatives. The 2016-17 budget will further enhance this reputation and provide significant opportunity to gain the greatest economic benefit from being at the forefront of this work.

It is my pleasure to reaffirm the ACT government's commitment to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2020. The changes to the Electricity Feed-In (Large Scale Renewable Generation) Act 2011 have increased the renewable capacity limit from 550 megawatts to 650 megawatts to enable the ACT to achieve the 100 per cent renewable energy target. We will do this within the next four years.

The widely acclaimed solar and wind auction processes undertaken by this government have delivered not only some of the cheapest rates for renewable energy achieved in the country, but also wider-ranging economic benefits for the territory. Such was the competitiveness of prices obtained for the renewable energy that the ACT is currently in a situation where the market price is higher than the feed-in tariff, meaning the difference is paid to ActewAGL and will be passed through to the community in lower electricity prices.

This is a great outcome for the territory and proof of the long-term value of renewable energy. The auction process has also attracted some of the biggest and most innovative companies in renewable technologies to base their operations in Canberra. On top of this, the process has also created the renewable energy innovation fund through contributions from the successful proponents.

A total funding pool of \$12 million will be made available under four funding streams: trades training innovation to accelerate the development of export-oriented trades training services for the national renewable energy and energy storage industries; energy research partnerships to attract the most talented energy researchers to the ACT and to develop local institutional capacity to deliver applied research services to local businesses; a renewable energy innovation precinct in the city west-new Acton area, including support for small, local and inbound businesses, thus extending the reach and capacity of the CBR Innovation Network; and technology demonstrations to support the development and commercialisation of new renewable energy, energy storage and energy control system technologies.

There is huge interest from industry in doing business with the territory, particularly when it comes to renewable energy. The next generation energy storage auction received 17 proposals for the \$2 million project. Next generation energy storage combines solar generation with energy storage technologies to address the issues of intermittency of solar energy supply. The ACT is determined to play its part in developing the emerging distributed storage industry while capturing the benefits for households, businesses, research and trades training institutions.

The global battery storage market is predicted to be worth \$400 billion by 2030. Due to its supportive policy environment and world-leading research capability, the ACT is an ideal launching pad for both national and international businesses seeking to get a head start in this exciting emerging industry. Through the next generation energy storage grants program, the ACT government has a vision for Canberra to become a globally recognised centre for distributed storage, innovation and investment.

In the past year we have strengthened the governance of water in the territory. The establishment of the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group has greatly improved collaboration across the region and highlights the need for a holistic approach, as water has no boundary. The group comprises senior representatives from the commonwealth, New South Wales, ACT, local governments, Icon Water and the community. The establishment of this committee could not have come at a better time, with confirmation that the ACT has secured commonwealth funding as part of the basin priority project.

As part of this year's budget we have committed \$200,000 to the implementation of the climate change adaption strategy for the ACT. The territory is likely to be impacted by climate change in a number of ways. These include temperature increases, more prolonged heatwaves and drought, variable rainfall, more intense storms and flooding, and more intense bushfires. The community is already heavily engaged in this process. The draft adaption strategy attracted 170 submissions that will help inform the final strategy to be released by the government soon.

During 2015-16 over 391,000 activities took place in more than 22,000 households, including the installation of energy efficient lights, door seals, standby power controllers, instantaneous gas water heaters, and decommissioning of refrigerators and freezers. Each activity has an abatement value based on deemed greenhouse gas emissions. Accordingly, the territory is achieving its reduction targets. But even more important is the value to the households taking place in these projects. The claimed abatement for all activities was 190 kilotons of CO₂, of which 24 kilotons were claimed for priority households, thus meeting the government's target in this area.

Our government has a significant focus on reducing the cost of living, particularly for low income households. A new program commenced on 1 October last year is to help low income households improve the energy efficiency of their homes and contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The low income program, formerly the outreach program, is delivered by St Vincent de Paul. The program offers low income households an in-home energy assessment and education to improve their understanding of energy and water use, and it provides energy saving kits, a heated throw rug and extensive draught-proofing to the house. The program also replaces old inefficient refrigerators and installs curtains to a number of priority households.

Also part of the strategy to reduce our carbon footprint is providing assistance to businesses. To facilitate this goal the government has implemented the Actsmart business energy and water program, which provides advice and financial assistance for efficiency upgrades to small businesses to help reduce energy and water consumption.

Money for the Actsmart schools program will also continue. The program implements a whole-of-school action learning and behavioural change approach to sustainability that supports schools to introduce sustainable management practices into everyday school operations and to create a school culture committed to minimising its impact on the environment.

All 134 ACT schools have registered with the Actsmart schools program. It provides the following assistance to schools: resources such as best practice guides and curriculum units on the sustainable management of energy, water, waste and recycling, school grounds and biodiversity, and the integration of sustainability into the curriculum.

Staff give advice, conduct energy assessments, address school meetings and help establish student teams. There are also visits by qualified horticulturalists. Also schools receive advice in irrigation, plant selection, garden design to reduce water and energy consumption, keeping chickens, composting, and establishing food gardens.

Continuing to enhance the natural environment will be a focus for this government. The budget includes \$350,000 for the construction of engineered log jams in the Murrumbidgee River system near Tharwa. These structures will improve the habitat of native fish species by deepening the river, in some cases by over a metre.

Our highly successful work in managing threatened species will continue throughout 2016-17. This year saw the reintroduction of the eastern quoll into Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary in Gungahlin. Eastern quolls are carnivorous marsupials slightly smaller than domestic cats. The species was lost from the local region almost a century ago and from mainland Australia in 1922. It is a threatened species nationally. To date nine eastern quolls from Tasmania and a captive source in Victoria have made their home in the fox and cat-free sanctuary. Recent surveys by our research partners from the Australian National University confirm that female quolls have bred and are likely to have some young in spring. So over the next two years up to 64 eastern quolls are to be released into the sanctuary, with the aim of establishing a sustainable population.

Funding has also been provided to continue with the kangaroo monitoring program. We are expecting the results of the first trial of the hand-injected fertility drug GonaCon to be available at the end of 2016. Observations are showing that this program is already having success in managing the kangaroo population.

The successful ACT environment grants program, which has been funded annually since 1997 to provide financial assistance for community-based environmental projects, will continue in 2016-17. In 2015-16, \$185,000 was allocated to community groups to deliver seven projects focused on restoring landscape, removing weeds, citizen science, improving riparian habitat, and engaging with youth and Aboriginal people.

It has now been over 12 months since the commencement of the revised Nature Conservation Act. During this time the government has implemented a number of actions which have improved the management of a natural environment in the territory. This included the appointment of a scientific committee which consists of experts in biodiversity, ecology, conservation science and conservation management to provide advice on the listing of threatened species and advice to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna during the development of draft action plans.

With the government commitment to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2020, our greatest sources of emissions will come from transport-related activities. This is why as part of the budget the government has committed \$150,000 to determine our future transport options. We do need to rethink our forms of transport and to use innovative technology systems that maximise 100 per cent renewable energy and help us reduce transport emissions. Electric vehicles will be an important component in these future options.

This budget showcases this government's commitment to the environment. The budget shows how small jurisdictions can make a huge difference to combat the challenges of climate change, lessen the burden on its residents and build a sustainable place for every Canberran to enjoy and be proud of.

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (9.54): I will respond to some of the comments by Mr Gentleman when he mentioned the Tuggeranong community. I want to reflect on a recommendation in the estimates committee report that asked the government to provide adequate funds to upgrade the Tuggeranong Arts Centre to ensure that it is compliant with all safety standards and can offer full amenities to all its patrons.

The Tuggeranong Arts Centre was built in 1998. It was the first multi-purpose arts facility of its kind built in the ACT. It offers a vast range of activities. If members look at its website, this month alone there is a shopfront art club offering chances to produce, script, film and edit your own short film. There is a workshop for Instagrammers; there is a classical twilight concert; and there is "lakeside live" with a series of life drawings. They are a few of the activities that happen at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre.

I am very pleased with the government's response to this recommendation. It has agreed to it and has committed to upgrades to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. They will be addressed through the reprioritisation of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate's existing capital upgrades funding. This means that all those necessary upgrades to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre to make sure all patrons—young, old, young at heart—can get there and enjoy the facilities and the activities that I know you, Madam Assistant Speaker, and I are fully aware of and that happen at Tuggeranong Arts Centre each and every week. That is a very good outcome for the Tuggeranong arts community.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Burch**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Valedictory
Belconnen workplace fatality

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) (9.57): I wish to use my adjournment speech tonight to say thank you to the people of Ginninderra who elected me in 2012 to represent their interests and put my community first in my work here in the ACT government. I would like to thank all of the people that I have met and worked with to build an even stronger community in Belconnen.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the many organisations and stakeholder groups who have contributed their time and expertise to my work as minister, all of the peak bodies, all of the service providers in housing and homelessness work, the women's sector, community services, the multicultural sector, asylum seeker and refugee support, and youth services. People accessing these services have been willing to have a chat with me whenever I visited their local service groups. Sporting groups—from local clubs through to peak bodies and their leadership team—as well as all of the sportspeople have always been happy to show a drop-in minister all of their fantastic skills. I thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, as well as our fabulous multicultural community.

I would also like to thank ACT government officials from the Community Services Directorate, including the Community Participation Group, as well as Housing ACT, and Active Canberra within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

I would also like to thank all of the Assembly staff and all of the committee secretaries, although I have not worked directly with them since I have been on the frontbench, as well as all of the attendants in this place. Thank you for keeping our glasses full and for having a happy face as we come into the Assembly each day.

I would especially like to thank the cleaners for keeping my office neat and tidy for me and my team. I would also like to make special mention of Rick Hart and thank him for his patience when I have asked him to hang a picture or fix a light in my office. He has been incredibly patient and I will miss his happy and cheery smile in this place.

Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge my colleagues in the government. I look forward to working with each of you over the coming months as well as the years to come.

Tonight I would like to take the time during my adjournment speech to pay my respects and to offer my sympathies to the man, and his family and friends, who was killed during the catastrophic workplace accident in Belconnen last week. I pay my respects and pass on my sympathies to his workmates, to all of the union members and to anybody else here in the Canberra community who witnessed this event or an injury or death at another ACT worksite. I know there will be many people who have

been affected by this most recent tragic death. I acknowledge the offer made by the CFMEU to assist and support them through counselling services during this very difficult time.

I would like to take a moment to pause during my adjournment speech and reflect on what should have been an ordinary day in this man's life, when he should have been able to leave work and go home and visit his family, as anyone would be expected to do, and return home safely that night. I invite members to join with me for a moment to pause and reflect on that for a moment. Thank you, members.

Luton charity ball

MR COE (Ginninderra) (10.00): Last Saturday evening I had the pleasure of attending the 2016 Luton charity ball, along with Mr Hanson and also Mr Rattenbury. The ball provides an opportunity for local charities to raise much-needed funds and to raise their profiles in the Canberra community. Rhonda Burchmore was the MC for the evening and was, of course, very entertaining. We also heard some emotional and powerful stories about people who have suffered as a result of their service to our community. I would like to acknowledge and thank Allan Sparkes CV and Todd Berry for sharing their stories. I think everyone in the room was moved by their heroism in service but also in their openness in speaking about their struggles and their recovery.

This year's ball supported groups working to prevent suicide with OzHelp, Menslink and Lifeline, the beneficiaries of the fundraising. The night provided a great chance to celebrate the life-saving work of all three charities and the roles that they and their volunteers play in keeping our community strong.

OzHelp was founded in 2001 after the suicide of young Canberra man, David O'Bryan. David's mother, Lorraine, worked with local organisations to put in place support services targeted at young men working in the construction industries to help prevent other families experiencing the same loss. OzHelp relies on state and federal government funding, as well as charitable donations and fundraising, to continue to provide suicide prevention services and training to more than 33,000 Australians every year. I would like to acknowledge the great work done by the CEO of the OzHelp Foundation, Tony Holland, and his team.

Menslink started in 2002, having operated for a number of years prior to that as a young men's support network under the auspices of the Woden Community Centre. Founded by Richard Shanahan, a fellow of the Churchill Memorial Trust, Menslink was established to meet the increasing needs of young men and their families in our community. Menslink provides youth mentoring and counselling. It holds regular events and visits schools and organisations to speak about young men's issues, men's mental health, mental fitness, suicide prevention, and about the work that Menslink does in the community.

The work of Lifeline in Canberra would be familiar to many of us. For 45 years Lifeline Canberra has provided telephone crisis support through the telephone number 131114 to the people of Canberra and the surrounding region. As part of an

Australia-wide network of Lifeline centres, Lifeline Canberra takes calls from people who are in need of support at times of crisis. A dedicated team of over 250 trained volunteers from the ACT and region ensure the phone is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Lifeline telephone crisis support provides impartial, non-judgemental and confidential support. In addition to the telephone crisis support service, Lifeline Canberra provides a number of other mental health awareness programs to our community.

I would like to commend the sponsors of this year's ball: Rolfe Infiniti, Urban Pantry, Doubleshot, Locale Pizzeria, realestate.com.au, Re-seal Bathrooms, Velocity Conveyancing, Lennox Motors, GoHosting and Fuji Xerox.

Finally, I would like to congratulate and thank Richard Luton and the team at Luton Properties for again hosting this wonderful event and for their great community service program. Their generosity really is exceptional.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 10.04 pm.