



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

7 JUNE 2017

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Wednesday, 7 June 2017

Crimes (Intimate Image Abuse) Amendment Bill 2017	1937
Crimes (Invasion of Privacy) Amendment Bill 2017	1943
Bushfire abatement zone	1947
Ngunnawal bush healing farm	1950
Community facilities zoned land—government transparency.....	1965
Questions without notice:	
Budget—rates	1982
Budget—justice and community safety portfolio.....	1984
Budget—women	1985
Budget—transport and city services portfolio.....	1986
Budget—election promises.....	1987
Visitors.....	1989
Questions without notice:	
Budget—election promises.....	1989
Budget—health funding	1990
Clubs—assistance package	1993
Schools—student wellbeing	1994
Budget—health funding	1997
Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability—estimates availability	1999
Standing orders—suspension.....	2000
Dissent from ruling	2001
Questions without notice:	
Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability—estimates availability	2006
Electricity—blackouts	2006
Light rail—utilities disruption	2007
Canberra Hospital—dermatology services	2008
Public housing—community consultation.....	2009
Unparliamentary language.....	2010
Budget—policing.....	2010
Parliamentary language.....	2012
Leave of absence.....	2013
Supplementary answer to question without notice:	
Housing—homelessness	2013
Paper	2013
Public housing.....	2014
Health spending	2015
Recidivism rates.....	2036
Demonstration housing precincts.....	2048
Adjournment:	
Health—rare cancer funding	2060
Belconnen Community Service	2062
Giralang community park	2064
Woden town centre	2065
Kambah village.....	2065
Budget—Belconnen.....	2066
Budget—election promises.....	2068

Wednesday, 7 June 2017

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

Crimes (Intimate Image Abuse) Amendment Bill 2017

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.01): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise this morning to present the bill titled Crimes (Intimate Image Abuse) Amendment Bill. This addresses an issue that is growing and damaging—the distribution of private images of a person without their consent. We have certainly heard of terms like “sexting” and “revenge porn”, but these terms do not do justice to the real harm being done by these actions.

An article on a research paper by RMIT on 8 May this year stated:

The first comprehensive research on ‘revenge porn’ has revealed the mass scale of victimisation across Australia, with 1 in 5 people suffering image-based abuse.

One in five, Madam Speaker: this is a widespread problem. And it is a serious problem. In the same article, RMIT University’s Dr Nicola Henry said:

This isn’t just about ‘revenge porn’—images are being used to control, abuse and humiliate people in ways that go well beyond the ‘relationship gone sour’ scenario.

Victims have also found the courage to speak out, and some of their stories are truly harrowing. There is one of a girl of 17 who shared an image. The report in the *Daily Telegraph* of 5 April this year takes up her story. I quote:

Three years later her photos were found by a friend of her boyfriend while he perused an image sharing site.

He knew it was her because it had her full name and former school listed.

It also had messages about her sexual behaviour, with various members talking about sexual acts she had performed on them—none of which were true.

On the message boards she was objectified, vilified and dehumanised.

The story also highlights how powerless victims feel. The article continues:

Her boyfriend and friends urged her not to take action. They didn't want the boy that had shared the images or other friends who might have passed them along getting in trouble.

They didn't feel that would be fair. She did her own investigation and found folders with images of three other girls she had been at school with. She contacted them but they didn't want to act. They were scared of drawing more attention to the images and hoped by not acting the issue would eventually go away. They were ashamed.

She described the pain she felt at seeing her image being traded like a footy card, at seeing her image abused and dehumanised by anonymous people who made up lies, rated her body and used callous threats and abuse with abandon.

She felt sick and powerless and completely alone.

This has impacted her sense of safety. She feels hunted, she feels dehumanised. She knows the perpetrator has not had any similar repercussions—nor have those who anonymously share and comment on her image.

I wish this was only an isolated incident, but it is not. In the article that I referred to, the police in New South Wales are quoted as having received 350 complaints in the past six months, and that is only those with the courage to come forward. Countless others suffer in silence, across all community groups.

In the RMIT report, the following statistics highlight the full extent of the problem: one in three people aged 16 to 19, and one in four aged 20 to 29, reported at least one form of image victimisation; women, 22 per cent, and men, 23 per cent, were equally likely to be victimised; 56 per cent of people with a disability and 50 per cent of Indigenous Australians have been victims of image-based abuse; and people who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual were more likely to be victims, at 36 per cent, than heterosexual people, at 21 per cent.

These figures tell how many have been affected, but the report goes on to show how damaging these effects are. Eighty per cent of people who had experienced "sextortion" reported high levels of psychological distress, consistent with moderate to severe depression and/or anxiety disorder, with 46 per cent also feeling highly fearful for their safety. Moderate to severe depression and/or anxiety affected 75 per cent of victims whose images were distributed, and 67 per cent of those whose images were taken without consent. Thirty-nine per cent of people whose images were distributed and 28 per cent of those whose images were taken without consent felt highly fearful for their safety.

From stories we read in the media, to reports from police, to studies by academic researchers, it is clear we have a serious problem with serious impacts. The bill that I have tabled today seeks to address these problems; to bring consequences to the perpetrators and to bring justice to the victims.

Turning to the bill, I will provide a brief history of its development and a brief overview of its operation. The bill was first presented in an exposure draft and placed on the legislation register on 18 May this year, following significant work internally. I would like to thank Ms Lawder for doing a lot of work internally within the opposition to bring this forward. The draft was circulated to many stakeholder groups, and links and feedback forms were included on the Canberra Liberals have your say website.

When presented, it was largely based on the Victorian model of this legislation, which, at the time, was one of only two operational laws in Australia. Since the presentation of the exposure draft, New South Wales has also tabled a bill to address the same problem. We received valuable and insightful feedback, and I would like to thank everybody who offered their time and expertise to help bring this revised bill forward. Beyond the individual constituents who have commented on the bill, we have received extensive feedback from organisations including the Law Society, the Bar Association, the Human Rights Commissioner, the Victims of Crime Commissioner, the Public Advocate, the Children and Young People Commissioner, and the Disability and Community Services Commissioner.

The response has been universally positive, with all supporting the intent of the bill and the timeliness of the Canberra Liberals in bringing it forward. The groups, by and large, had similar suggestions for improvements. Those comments have been noted and acted upon, and informed the bill that has been tabled today.

I will go through the clauses. With respect to definitions, the bill provides specific definitions. Some of these have been developed through our consultation processes and some are required because the type of offence we are dealing with is unprecedented. This includes definitions for “intimate image”, “capturing visual data”, the meaning of “distribute” and the meaning of “consent” in this context. All provide valuable guidance for the application of the legislation in what we have attempted to be a clear, concise and precise manner.

Moving to the main offence, which is the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, the bill provides that a person commits an offence if they distribute an intimate image of another person, and the offender either knows the other person does not consent to the distribution or is reckless as to whether the other person has consented.

This provision is drafted differently from the exposure draft, and is based on feedback from stakeholders and the introduction of the New South Wales legislation. It requires the lack of consent to be an element of the prosecution, and was an important consideration from most of those who provided advice. It also brings us into line with New South Wales. It is important to note that, where possible, the view of the opposition is that if we are going to have harmonisation of laws it is best to do so with New South Wales, given our geographical position within New South Wales.

The bill provides that a person found guilty will face a penalty of three years in jail or 300 penalty units, which is again consistent with New South Wales. As we are dealing with serious consequences of the offence, we believe there should also be serious penalties, and that is what this bill delivers.

We have also created a secondary offence, that is, to threaten to capture or distribute intimate images. Some of the stories that we have heard include not only the actual release of intimate images but of people threatening to do so, to intimidate, harass or coerce another person. While not as potentially damaging as actually releasing those images, it definitely is traumatic and should be unlawful. That is why this bill also makes it an offence to threaten to distribute or capture intimate images.

The provisions also cover the fact that threats can be made explicitly or implicitly, and it does not matter whether the images exist at the time or not. This way, even threatening to take intimate images and distribute them will put you foul of the law. Given the harm that we have seen from this sort of predatory behaviour, we believe it is vitally important that this forms part of our response to the problem.

Having outlined the key offence provisions, I would like to talk about some of the exceptions and protections that we have included. There is no doubt that this is a complex and difficult area. We have tried to draft exceptions and protections that indicate clearly what the intent of this legislation is, which is the knowing or reckless distribution of intimate images without consent or with reckless intent.

For example, we have included provisions for young people, who are within two years age of each other, regarding whether consent is not at issue. The bill also includes the provision that, if the offender is under 16 years of age, action must not commence without specific approval from the DPP. There are specific exceptions for legitimate uses, such as for the purpose of law enforcement, medical procedures or other circumstances where a reasonable person would consider the conduct acceptable, taking into account all the circumstances.

While these may not be strictly necessary at law, it is necessary to be clear about what is and is not intended to be covered. We are talking about the deliberate, harmful acts of one person against another in circumstances that I believe we would all feel should be protected by law.

Another important element that we have imported from New South Wales, based on the feedback that we have received and that was not in the exposure draft, is that of rectification. We know from many of the stories, and through research, that the primary goal of many victims is actually to have the images removed. That is their number one goal. While it could be said that a court could provide these powers, anyway, we believe, as does New South Wales and many of the groups that we have consulted with, that a definite, direct line of recourse is extremely valuable as a tool to offer those affected by these sorts of crimes.

This bill specifically gives the court the power to order a person to take all reasonable steps to remove, retract, recover, delete or destroy an image related to the offence within a specified time limit. This is the most direct solution we can offer to actually help the victim. But it is not sufficient to create an order that can be defied, so there is a penalty. If a person does not comply, they face two years jail. It is just for the victim, and will ensure that a person does all they can to get rid of the harm that they have done.

Moving on to the broader debate that we have had within the Assembly, I note that the Greens will be shortly providing an exposure draft. They have provided us with a copy of that bill, and I thank them for it. I think there is a tripartisan view about the way forward here, and that we want to get this done. I hope that it can be done in a collegiate manner. I am sure that the community does not want us to be bickering over point scoring. This is about actually getting the result.

I thank them for providing that bill. It is clear that the Greens have been talking to many of the people that we have been talking to, in forming this legislation. I note that their bill goes further than ours, in that it goes beyond the intimate image sharing and has a couple of other issues. That includes provisions against “stealthling”. Equally, the opposition and I share concerns about stealthling. However, I think that the approach that has been taken by the Greens in this bill goes too far. It does not actually mention stealthling as a specific issue, but says that it becomes a crime when a person makes “a fraudulent misrepresentation of any fact”. I think that is too broad in its nature. This would mean the person misrepresenting any fact is not just guilty of lying but potentially guilty of a sexual offence that carries a penalty of up to 12 years in prison.

I am keen to see that we address stealthling. I think that it is best done by way of a separate piece of legislation, whoever brings that forward: the government, the Greens or the Liberal Party. We look forward to working with the other parties on that. But it does require, as does the bill that is being tabled today, very careful drafting to make sure that there are not unintended consequences and that we do not go too far in trying to deal with what is quite a specific crime.

The other issue that I note in the exposure draft from the Greens is that of consent. We actually changed this after releasing our exposure draft, based on consultation and on the New South Wales model. From a legal point of view, it places on the defendant a burden of proof that they may never be able to reach. The Human Rights Commissioner and the Law Society both indicated in written submissions that a structure that puts the burden on the defence for a provision with a jail term attached is unlikely to pass the human rights test. So we have changed the approach to that of the onus of proof based on that advice that we received. I note that that is now different from the exposure draft.

Another issue is that of strict liability. I do have concerns about these being strict liability offences, particularly where imprisonment is a penalty. Having these as strict liability offences is a concern. They are issues that we have noted. I do not think that

that negates the fact that we are probably all working together to achieve an end. We just want to make sure that it is the right bill and that it is best-practice law.

Another issue that the Greens will be putting forward relates to taking photographs of Muslim women without a hijab when they normally wear one in public. I think that is equally problematic. Potentially taking a photo of a Muslim woman's head can become a criminal offence with a two-year jail term. I think that is going too far and it is unworkable.

I think that the best approach is to deal with the issue of intimate images as a discrete bill. There are other issues at play, be it stealthing or others, and we need to look at those carefully. I think those should be covered by a discrete piece of legislation. Although consent is obviously a common thread, they are quite different in nature.

As I mentioned, we have also been talking to the Attorney-General about this approach. I would like to thank him for the discussions we have had so far with him and his staff. I note that everybody wants us to get on with this. We have now had a number of jurisdictions that have done so. This is now tabled. As I said it is as a consequence of a lot of advice that we have received. I am very happy to share with other members of the Assembly the advice that I have received from the Human Rights Commissioner, the bar and the Law Society that has got us to the point that we are at. If we can work on this together to get a result in August, that would be a good thing. I am very happy to sit down with the Greens and the Labor Party to discuss any views that they have and suggested amendments if they think there are enhancements or improvements that can be made to the legislation that has been tabled today.

This has been the result of a lot of work. I know that it is not just I, Ms Le Couteur and Mr Ramsay who are interested in this; others within our parties share an interest in this. I would like to thank the Law Society, and particularly Dianne O'Hara, for her feedback, and the Bar Association, especially Ken Archer. The Human Rights Commissioner and other commissioners provided very helpful analysis: Helen Watchirs, John Hinchey, Jodie Griffiths-Cook and Karen Toohey. Their responses were excellent; in fact we incorporated all of their suggestions into our bill.

The drafters at PCO worked hard on this bill and no doubt on the Greens one as well. They do an excellent job, and I would like to thank the drafters at PCO who have worked very hard on this bill, particularly noting that the exposure draft that was drafted is very different from the bill I have presented today. I would also like to thank Mr Ian Hagan in my office. It is very handy to have a senior adviser with an honours law degree who is an expert in and is passionate about the law, and who has been able to go through this in detail. He has worked with PCO so that we could present an excellent, very well considered bill and a very well drafted explanatory statement. I thank him very much.

In conclusion, it seems that we will, in this Assembly, come up with a bill that will stop what I consider to be a vile crime. There is detail to work through. There is much discussion still to be had, no doubt, but I am greatly encouraged that the three parties in this place have a unity of purpose, and that is to keep people who are victims of this terrible act safe in our community.

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

Crimes (Invasion of Privacy) Amendment Bill 2017 Exposure draft

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.21): I seek leave to table an exposure draft of the Crimes (Invasion of Privacy) Amendment Bill 2017 and associated papers, and to make a statement in relation to the papers.

Leave granted.

MS LE COUTEUR: I present the following papers:

Crimes (Invasion of Privacy) Amendment Bill 2017—Exposure draft—

Exposure draft.

Explanatory statement.

Consultation arrangements.

Invasions of Privacy & Technology-Facilitated Abuse—ACT Greens discussion paper, dated June 2017.

Madam Speaker, this exposure draft that I am tabling today seeks to protect our community from non-consensual sharing of intimate images and documents. I am pleased that this is something which clearly the whole Assembly has recognised as an issue. I thank Mr Hanson for his contribution a minute or two ago. I will speak a little more about that later in my speech. I also thank the Labor Party and the Attorney-General for their interest and contribution to this debate. We have also had some useful discussions with your staff.

We have a situation in which there is a ubiquity of cameras. We have them on our phones. I have one on my desk. I imagine we probably all have one on our desk or on our person. They are on our computers; they are in our houses; they are in shops. It just makes it easy to take photographs of people and videos of people without either their knowledge or consent. Social media and the internet make these images easy to share and to distribute widely. Our laws need to evolve with the changes of technology and to keep pace with the behavioural changes in society that result from these changes.

We know that, regardless of whether they have experienced this abuse themselves, 80 per cent of Australians think that it should be a crime for someone to share a sexual image of another person without that person's consent. As Mr Hanson did, I am going to quote some figures from the recent study by the RMIT. It found that one in five Australians has experienced image-based abuse. Victims of image-based abuse experience high levels of psychological distress.

Interestingly, women and men are equally likely to report being a victim but perpetrators of image-based abuse are most likely to be male and known to the victim.

Men and young adults are more likely to voluntarily share a nude or sexual image of themselves. Women are more likely than men to fear for their safety due to image-based abuse.

Abuse risk is high for those who share sexual selfies but they are not the only victims. In fact, disturbingly, one in two Australians with a disability and one in two Indigenous Australians report being the victim of image-based abuse, and image-based abuse victimisation is higher for lesbian, gay and bisexual Australians as well as young people aged between 16 and 29.

In the ACT in 2016 an investigation by the Australian Federal Police identified over 70 Australian schools whose students were involved in a child exploitation ring. Five of those schools were in the ACT. Young women were targeted by young men they knew. Their photographs, sometimes naked, were shared around to be “rated”.

This case illustrated how entrenched social attitudes that lead to young men seeing their female classmates and friends as conquests combine with modern technology to hurt these young women. This was not an incident of stalking or surveillance. In all likelihood many of the images, possibly all of the images, were originally captured and shared consensually. The trust that these young women had that the other person—their friend or their romantic partner—would not share these private intimate images with others was shattered. The case represented betrayal of their trust, an invasion of their privacy and an exploitation of their sexuality.

In combating this behaviour it is important that we do not shame or depress these young women. The fault lies with the young men who betrayed their trust. This case highlights the need for law reform in the ACT, not just to ensure that these behaviours are criminalised but even more importantly to send a strong message to the community and other young people that the ACT community does not tolerate these actions. In this respect, I note very positively the outbreak of tripartisan concern about this matter and the probability that soon there will be much better legislation on this issue.

There are two reasons why the Greens have not referred to revenge porn in our draft legislation. The first is that it brings to mind a jilted lover posting naked images of their ex on a pornography website. This is just far too narrow. We are trying to combat a wide range of behaviours to ensure that we are equipped to combat all types of technology-facilitated abuse, whether image-based or otherwise.

The second reason we have not referred to revenge porn is that the most common response from the community about the sharing of intimate photos is that the woman should not have taken a naked or intimate photo or allowed someone she trusted to. The focus then becomes that she consented to the photo, not that someone that she most likely trusted took that photo and shared it inappropriately and without consent, without permission.

This is a classic example of victim blaming which is an all-too-common response to domestic and sexual violence. Let me be clear: if a young woman takes a naked photo

of herself and sends it to her romantic partner, that is her right. The proposed legislation specifically addresses consensual sharing of intimate images for those under age and ensures that no young person will be charged with child pornography offences simply for having intimate pictures of another person under age which were shared with them consensually.

As part of this, we propose a requirement that the Director of Public Prosecution's approval must be sought before proceeding with any prosecution of an offence for those aged under 16. We know that this issue is more widespread than we want to admit in the ACT. The Canberra Rape Crisis Centre told me that they have over 80 young women on their waiting list. The vast majority of these women have experienced technology-facilitated abuse.

Similarly, as I said, we know that imaged-based abuse is higher for lesbian, gay and bisexual Australians, and we have no reason to believe this is not happening in the ACT. In fact, in a recent case in the ACT a group of young men, some under the age of 18, targeted gay men on Grindr, a dating app for gay men.

They exploited the trust of other people via the app to extract information and footage of them and then proceeded to extort, threaten and blackmail them. Tragically in this case, a young man who had been a victim of targeted blackmail took his own life. While the court could not prove that the extortion and blackmail attempts were directly to blame, it is clear that they were a factor.

The ACT AIDS Action Council at the time indicated that there were a number of young gay men in our community experiencing this sort of behaviour, this crime. In both the Grindr case and the earlier ones with ACT schools, the perpetrators were teenage men. The scale of the problem shows the need to take not just a tough-on-crime approach to technology facilitated abuse but also the need to work on changing attitudes and beliefs, especially amongst young people. It is critically important to ensure that our young people are taught from an early age, at school and at home—in fact, everywhere—about respectful relationships.

It is not just a legal problem. This is primarily a cultural problem. This behaviour is a manifestation of technological advances, the growing normalisation of taking intimate selfies and the growing trend of using these images to extort, exploit, coerce, threaten and intimidate others. These inappropriate uses of images aim for power, control and coercion over others.

Their increasing prevalence sends a clear, unequivocal message that we as a community need to take this seriously and that it will not be tolerated. I am very pleased that this tripartisan agreement in the Assembly will send a very clear message to the community: this will not be tolerated.

It is important for us to recognise that the initial act of documenting intimate or sexual moments is normal and that it is consistent with community standards. We need to be careful to maintain a sex-positive lens over any reforms and to ensure that we do not criticise, shame or demean individuals taking part in consensual behaviour that involves them sharing intimate images of themselves.

The fact that such a high proportion of adults and young people take part in these consensual activities highlights the importance of robust laws about non-consensual sharing of these images and the need for accessible enforcement measures to ensure these behaviours are mitigated and that those responsible for this behaviour are held accountable for it.

The legislation the Greens have developed is based on synthesising the key findings from the Australian Law Reform Commission report *Serious invasions of privacy in a digital era*; the 2016 Senate inquiry into the phenomenon colloquially referred to as “revenge porn”; the “more than revenge” universities round table in 2016; the New South Wales Department of Justice consultation on the sharing of intimate images without consent, 2016; *Not just ‘revenge pornography’*, an interim report from the ARC discovery project into the legal implications of revenge pornography 2017; the COAG Law, Crime and Community Safety Council’s national statement of principles relating to the criminalisation of non-consensual sharing of images 2017; the experiences of Victoria, South Australia and the United Kingdom and their evaluations of the effect of the current legislation; and the draft bill before the New South Wales parliament.

My legislation proposes the development of a new part of the Crimes Act to deal with the invasion of privacy, recognising that not all intimate observations are necessarily sexual in nature. It implements recommendations 2 and 3 of the 2016 Senate inquiry, being that the ACT ensures that our criminal justice system recognises three offences: knowingly or recklessly recording an intimate image without consent; knowingly or recklessly sharing intimate images without consent; and threatening to take and/or share intimate images without consent, irrespective of whether or not these images exist.

It adopts terms like “document” rather than “image” to include things like audio recording as well as ensuring that things like digitally altered-images and posting of photos are included. It includes a wider definition of “intimate” to broaden the scope of offences to include maliciously sharing images on social media that are not necessarily sexual or nude, but that are nevertheless considered to be intimate by the person who is depicted in them, in line with the recommendations in the research.

It creates a clearer, stronger definition of “consent” more in line with national standards by adding a definition of consent to be free and voluntary agreement in line with the 2010 Australian Law Reform Commission report on family violence and expands the definition of “consent” to include a positive action element.

The proposed legislation also says clearly that consent is not given when a condom is removed during sex, when a condition of the sex was the wearing of the condom. This is what Mr Hanson referred to as stealthing. I think everyone would agree that it is way outside community expectations that that could possibly be regarded as consent.

We have also included a provision for the courts to order offenders to take reasonable action to remove, retract, recover, delete or destroy an intimate document involved in

the offence. We acknowledge that it may be outside the court's jurisdiction to entirely remove an image from the public space once distributed and acknowledge the limitations of what can be achieved in taking down online images at a sub-national level.

However, we believe that this is an important proposal for our community to consider as part of this complex issue. Once again, I would like to thank Mr Hanson for tabling his legislation this morning because, of course, it is clear that the issue needs to be addressed.

I also thank Mr Hanson for the changes that he has made to his draft. As I understand it, it has moved his legislation a lot closer to the draft that we are presenting. I welcome the impending outbreak of tripartisan agreement in this. I am very hopeful that the legislation that will be passed by the Assembly will be good legislation that will act on this technologically-facilitated abuse, this scourge.

My office has been working on this issue for some time. It was one of the ACT Greens' election commitments last year. As I indicated when I tabled the petition developed by Rhys Michie last sitting period, we have been working on it since then. That is why I am very pleased today that I am in a position to be able to table an exposure draft of the legislation, an explanatory statement outlining what we are proposing and why, and a detailed discussion paper encouraging interested members of the community to provide feedback.

Given what Mr Hanson said, I think that we have been talking to very similar people about the situation. Clearly, we have all spoken to the various commissioners and we so far have had some very useful feedback on our discussion paper. I feel very positive that the ACT has waited long enough on this issue and that in the not-too-distant future we will see good reform coming from this Assembly on this emerging issue of technologically-facilitated abuse.

Bushfire abatement zone

Debate resumed from 10 May 2017, on motion by **Mrs Jones**, as amended:

“That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

(a) Mr Ron McLeod's 2003 report “Inquiry into the Operational Response to the January 2003 Bushfires in the ACT” made the following recommendations:

- (i) “A bushfire-abatement zone (BAZ) should be defined between the north-west and western perimeter of Canberra and the Murrumbidgee River and the foothills of the Brindabella Range.”;
- (ii) “A set of Bushfire Protection Planning Principles in relation to fire mitigation and suppression should be adopted and applied to future developments in the designated abatement zone.”; and

- (iii) “The abatement zone should be declared a bushfire-prone area, and the requirements of the Building Code of Australia—in particular, its standards for bushfire-prone areas—should be applied to all future developments in the zone.”;
- (b) following the recommendations of Mr Ron McLeod, and in line with the later report handed down by Coroner Maria Doogan, the Emergencies Act 2004 was enacted and provided:
 - (i) a Bushfire Abatement Zone for planning and operational purposes;
 - (ii) for the BAZ to include “city areas” (“built-up areas” (BUA)); and
 - (iii) the Response Arrangements at that time (see Notifiable Instrument NI2004—499) included that: “If, in the opinion of the ACT Fire and Rescue, the fire poses a risk to life or property in the Built-up Area, then the ACT Fire and Rescue will assume incident control”. This remained in place in the 2006 iteration (Notifiable Instrument NI2006—221);
 - (c) the BAZ remains in place as a land planning and management tool as intended following the McLeod Inquiry;
 - (d) in 2011, the BAZ was updated to clarify response arrangements, as agreed by the then Chief Officers of the ACT Fire Brigade and the ACT Rural Fire Service;
 - (e) in 2016, following a review of the Emergencies Act 2004, there was an update to further clarify response arrangements; and
 - (f) in 2017, the BAZ and BUA boundaries were updated again to include the suburbs of Throsby and Jacka as built-up areas. This was notified by the Acting ESA Commissioner in a notifiable instrument in April 2017;
- (2) notes that:
- (a) changes to the BAZ and BUA have not altered the existing response arrangements, which are that first response to all grass and bush fires in the ACT will be by the nearest available most appropriate resource, irrespective of jurisdiction or Service; and
 - (b) ACT fire services continue to work together in responding to fires in the bushfire abatement zone; and
- (3) calls on the Minister to report to the Assembly by the last sitting day in August:
- (a) how the BAZ is controlled in regards to planning and operations and what operational procedures are in place to protect the ACT’s urban and rural areas; and

- (b) what planning or actions the ACT Emergency Services Agency is undertaking for when the built-up areas encroach onto the New South Wales border.

and on the amendment moved by **Mr Wall**—Insert new paragraph (3)(a):

- (a) “the rationale behind the 2011 changes and to explain, for the benefit of the community, how BAZ is controlled both in regards to fuel-reduction burning and in the event of a fire being within metres or kilometres of built-up areas.”

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.37): Once again I would like to thank Mrs Jones for her motion on the bushfire abatement zone, the BAZ. The government will agree to Mr Wall’s amendment to the motion and the motion as then amended.

I welcome the opportunity to report back to the Assembly in August to provide further detail on how well placed the ACT Emergency Services Agency, ESA, is to protect and preserve life, property and the environment during bushfire seasons. The report back to the Assembly will include information on the command and control arrangements in the BAZ, fuel reduction burning in the BAZ, actions undertaken by the ESA regarding built-up areas close to the New South Wales border, and the rationale behind the changes made in 2011 to clarify response arrangements as agreed by the then chief officers of the ACT fire brigade and the ACT Rural Fire Service.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that I have been recently advised of a minor administrative error made in amending the Emergencies Act in 2016 relevant to the matters under discussion today. The intention of the amendments contained in the Emergency Amendment Bill 2016, as stated in the explanatory statement and supporting speeches, was to remove the concept of the BAZ from the Emergencies Act for the purposes of operational planning and response. One of the proposed amendments was to delete section 29(3)(d), which gives the Chief Officer of ACT Fire & Rescue responsibility for operational planning in the BAZ. While this amendment was debated and passed in the Legislative Assembly in June last year, I have been advised that section 29(3)(d) was not removed.

This is an oversight that will be corrected through the next justice and community safety legislation amendment bill, scheduled to be introduced into the Legislative Assembly in September this year. All other references to the BAZ in the Emergencies Act, for the purposes of operational planning and response, were removed. It is only section 29(3)(d) that was not removed on the re-publication of the Emergencies Act for amendments on 21 June 2016.

I would like to give my strong assurance to the Assembly that the Emergencies Act has been applied as intended following the amendments made to the legislation last year and that these arrangements are working extremely well. This was highlighted

during the most recent 2016-17 bushfire season, when both ACT fire services worked together collaboratively and cohesively. The community can be assured that the current model for the provision of emergency services in the ACT is serving us well. It ensures a seamless response across agencies and across services to any emergency incidents faced by the people of the ACT.

Once again, I look forward to expanding on this when I report back to the Assembly in August.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Ngunnawal bush healing farm

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (10.40): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Government has spent more than \$12 million on a facility known as the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm (the facility);
- (b) that there has been a significant lack of progress in establishing and opening the facility since it was first mooted in 2007;
- (c) the Government has to date spent significant monies on developing four different models of care to be delivered at the facility but there is still no agreed model of care;
- (d) that successive ACT Labor Governments have failed to keep the community informed about the nature of the rehabilitation services to be offered at the facility; and
- (e) that this ACT Government wrongly attributed confusion over the nature of the facility to the ACT's indigenous community, when the confusion lay within the Health Directorate; and

(2) calls on the ACT Labor Government to:

- (a) accept responsibility for its own confusion and purveying of inconsistent information over the purpose for which the facility was built;
- (b) apologise to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for causing the confusion;
- (c) by close of Assembly business on Thursday, 8 June 2017, table a copy of the crown lease and the detailed chronology of any changes to the lease purpose clause which cover the facility;

- (d) by the close of Assembly business on Thursday, 24 August 2017 report on:
- (i) the full implementation of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm;
 - (ii) the final Model of Care to be delivered;
 - (iii) a timetable of when the facility will be opened; and
 - (iv) the final full cost to the Canberra community, including land purchase, building cost, land remediation, access and egress road and bridge construction, legal costs, and development of the model of care; and
- (e) commit to the urgent development of a Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation centre as requested by the ACT indigenous community.

The motion I bring to this place today, although lengthy, is not complex and the actions required are not difficult, with a bit of will and a bit of cooperation from members of the other side. But they are matters that need to be resolved, and urgently. The issues surrounding the Ngunnawal bush healing farm have gone on for too long.

As we know, in the past few weeks matters at the Ngunnawal bush healing farm have come to a head. I spoke to the Assembly at the last sitting, setting the matter straight on behalf of the Indigenous community who were wrongly accused of being confused about the nature of the facility. I called on the government then to apologise for their mistake in this matter. Reconciliation Week has just passed and now is a good time for the government to take that step to reconcile with the community and move forward.

In my discussions with the Indigenous community I have found that the Ngunnawal bush healing farm has become iconic to them as a beacon of hope. However, it has become yet another example of how this government has failed them. When it was first mooted, the facility was conceived as a therapeutic community property. It was to be a holistic centre in rural ACT, where Indigenous elders would work with the youth of the community who had come out of drug addiction. The focus of the facility was on rehabilitation with an emphasis on Aboriginal spirituality, culture and principles through recreational pursuits.

At some point in the long history of the bush healing farm, people started to refer to it as an alcohol and drug residential rehabilitation centre, including members of the government opposite. And maybe this is where the problem lies. There is no doubt that such a centre is urgently needed by the community. There are a growing number of incarcerations due to intoxication and drug use, up some 30 per cent over the past couple of years. These are worrying numbers. And something needs to be done about it. I had one member of the community share with me that she had lost two sons due to drug overdose and then demanded to know what the government was going to do about it.

There can be no doubt that the matter is urgent. And no-one can blame the Indigenous community for being irate, considering the time spent, almost 15 years from when the United Ngunnawal Elders Council first approached the ACT government with the concept of a bush healing farm in 2003. It took six years before the purchase of a suitable property. Then there was the land lease challenge, the finding of asbestos on the property and the bridge debacle. Now we hear that they failed to build an egress road. So the saga continues.

It begs the question: how much money has been spent on the development of this property? We know from recent annual reports that a revised project value of almost \$12 million was reported, a far cry from the original project value of just under \$7 million, in fact, almost double. Is this another case of the government's inability to bring projects in on time and on budget? We should know the true costs of the project. In this motion we call on the government to table a detailed timetable of costs in all areas. And this must include the costs associated with the model of care that will be implemented at the facility.

Four models of care have now been developed for the facility. The first one was published in 2010. This model was developed after extensive work by many, together with the advisory group on the project which included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. Developing this model included, according to members of the community whom I have spoken with, the visiting of like facilities overseas. It would be interesting to know just what the final cost of developing all these models of care will be.

The model of care at the centre of the current controversy was developed by Winnunga and ATODA, at the behest of the Health Directorate. They requested Winnunga to develop a short-term, 12-week drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation model of care based on the national drug and alcohol clinical care and prevention model, and that was their words.

It is no wonder, then, that the very comprehensive model developed included a clinical component, not a detoxification component; nor would methadone be administered on site. But in keeping with the model of care requested, a GP and a dual diagnostic nurse as well as 10 Aboriginal social health team workers would be employed, all to provide a holistic service. This would include the provision of psychotherapy, also in the original model, comprising a mix of cognitive behaviour, interpersonal and narrative therapies. This model was rejected, without notice or warning, and a fourth model of care developed and presented to a small, select group of people without explanation on 8 May this year. The Health Directorate must have nothing better to do with its time or money.

Eventually we reached the truth when the Director-General of Health gave us the explanation that this model of care could not be delivered on the site. The shame of it is that at no time was this made explicit to the community throughout the many years that the building of the facility was in progress. Why this government went out to tender for a service to run the Ngunnawal bush healing farm as an Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug rehabilitation service if they knew that it could not be used for the purpose requested is beyond understanding.

It was therefore even more inexplicable that the Chief Minister and the health minister should blame the Indigenous community for the confusion when their own directorate did not seem to understand what was allowable or purposed. Did the Health Directorate apply due diligence in order to ascertain whether their requested model was consistent with planning regulations? The truth is that Winnunga and ATODA should be commended for developing a model of care which includes both the original intent of the facility and the requirements of the brief.

The frustration of the Indigenous community is palpable. For almost 15 years they have waited for the Ngunnawal bush healing farm to be completed and opened to meet the urgent needs of the community. And then, so close to completion, they are met with the news that, yet again, due to the incompetence of the Health Directorate, the facility would not be opened.

As one member of the community, speaking to me on the ongoing failure of this government to meet the needs of the community, said: “We now have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug rehabilitation service that really isn’t an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug rehabilitation service; the debacle of Boomanulla oval, that has had its gates closed for the past three years with no sign of opening anytime soon; and an Aboriginal community controlled health service and youth service with buildings that are not fit for purpose. I am becoming more cynical by the day, and I am sick and tired of the rhetoric and I want action.”

We now reach the crux of the matter. What matters most at this time is the opening of this facility. The Ngunnawal bush healing farm is crucial in ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT get the help they need for their young people, for those in their community who are addicted to drugs and alcohol and need help. No-one in this place, I believe, disputes this is the case.

Politics aside, I urge all members in this place to support my motion today. A lot of money, time and effort have gone into building this facility and developing a comprehensive model of care. It is time for the government to stop the rhetoric and give the community action on this matter as a matter of some urgency.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.49): I thank Mr Milligan for his motion today and seek leave from the Assembly to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MS FITZHARRIS: I move:

- (1) Omit paragraph (1)(b), substitute:

“(b) the facility was first proposed in 2007;”.

(2) Omit paragraph (1)(c), substitute:

“(c) since 2007 there has been widespread community discussion about the services to be delivered at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, and although significant progress has been made in recent months towards the final services model and securing a service provider for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, the Government acknowledges the delays in this process;”.

(3) Omit paragraph (1)(d), substitute:

“(d) the ACT Government is continuing to hold frequent meetings with the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm Advisory Board to ensure the continued involvement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in delivering the best possible model of care, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council;”.

(4) Omit paragraph (1)(e), substitute:

“(e) that the ACT Government was not clear in its recent tender process, acknowledges these actions caused confusion in the community, and apologises for this confusion;”.

(5) Omit paragraph (2)(c), substitute:

“(c) by the close of Assembly business on Thursday, 8 June 2017, report on:

- (i) a copy of the crown lease and the detailed chronology of any changes to the lease purpose clause which cover the facility; and
- (ii) the relevant permitted uses of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm site under the Territory Plan;”.

(6) Omit paragraphs (2)(d) and (e), substitute:

“(d) provide a ministerial statement to the Assembly by the end of September 2017, following the completion of remaining works at the site, that outlines the final evolving model of care, available services, and their estimated commencement dates.”.

I understand there is agreement to my amendments. Of course I share with Mr Milligan, as do all members of this place, a commitment to improve the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community. Many services are provided by the ACT government notably in close partnership with local organisations and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to achieve this outcome. We acknowledge the gaps that exist and strive to do what we can to close them.

I note that, as was omitted by Mr Milligan, we made a commitment in yesterday's budget to a significant expansion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services through the provision of \$12 million to build a new health facility on what we all agree are ageing facilities at the Winnunga Nimmityjah health premises in Narrabundah.

We also accept that the Ngunnawal bush healing farm has been something that the united Ngunnawal elders have been pursuing for close to 15 years. It is a vision of community-based healing designed to address the systemic and root-cause issues that lie behind so many of the poor health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There is no doubt that the journey to where we are now has not been smooth or straightforward. There can also be no doubt that some of these issues have been caused by a lack of clarity from ACT Health more recently in its communications. However, there remains good will from the ACT government, the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and potential service providers to overcome these setbacks and deliver a service at the bush healing farm that meets the needs of the community.

In the spirit of overcoming these setbacks and in providing much-needed clarity, I will clarify and outline some of the history noted in my amendment. It is also for this reason that I will be amending Mr Milligan's motion today so that the decision of the Assembly appropriately represents the current facts and provides a positive vision for the future.

To begin with, the Ngunnawal bush healing farm capital budget was around \$12 million. I need to correct the record on the number of models of care that have been developed. It is not the case that four models of care have been developed; there have been two. The first is what could be called a therapeutic community model, and the second is the model Mr Milligan referred to developed by Winnunga Nimmityjah and ATODA in 2016.

By way of background and to explain some of this history, the first model, the therapeutic model, has been developed in stages with phase 1 developed in 2010. Stage 2 built on that first stage, providing more detail, and was used to inform the physical design of the facility. This is a necessary and routine process in the development of any type of infrastructure. This model was adopted and used for a request for proposal to procure a service provider for the Ngunnawal bush healing farm. This request for proposal was posted on the tenders ACT website in October 2015, however no responses were received.

This procurement was to provide for a therapeutic community in which people voluntarily choose to enter an abstinence-based residential community for personal growth and rehabilitation, specifically adapted to reflect the cultural requirements of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In effect, it was to break the cycle of addiction. This tender process was not for the provision of an alcohol or drug rehabilitation centre.

The unfortunate failure of this general tender process enabled direct negotiation with consultants and potential service providers. This is a service that has not been delivered in the territory before and is delivered in only a small number of other sites around the country. As a result, ACT Health sought advice on an appropriate model of service to be implemented. Winnunga Nimmityjah was contracted along with ATODA and Karralika to help develop a model of care for the bush healing farm. However, it did not meet all the requirements of ACT Health. To be clear, it is the therapeutic community model which is the agreed service model, and it is the one on which the discussions with the Ngunnawal bush healing farm advisory board have been held and continue to be held.

In relation to the confusion over the zoning of the bush healing farm and its consequence, it is important to be clear as to the precise nature of what occurred. The issue at the centre of this matter is not a failure on behalf of ACT Health to understand the zoning, rather, ACT Health did not adequately communicate to the organisations which were contracted in 2016 the precise nature of this zoning. This unfortunately resulted in Winnunga, ATODA and others developing a model of care that was not compatible with the site and created an inaccurate view as to the purpose of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm. These consequences are not the fault of any external individual or organisation. ACT Health has acknowledged this in forums and in correspondence. I acknowledged it in the media yesterday and again in my amendments to the motion today.

I would like to be clear, Madam Assistant Speaker, that when I and the Chief Minister spoke in question time during the last sitting about confusion, I never did say and it was never my intention to say that that confusion was the fault of anyone else other than the government. I put on the record formally, as I have done so informally in discussions, that that was never my intent and it was not exactly what I said on the day either.

To turn to the issue of timing, I acknowledge that this has been a long process, begun before many of us entered this place. There is no doubt it has been long and protracted, but it is important to note that, in part, it is not by accident. Because this is such a new and innovative service for the ACT and one of only a handful of examples in Australia, a large amount of learning and research needed to take place to ensure that this service is done correctly.

Further, as this service is one which uses culture as the foundation for healing, it relies on the knowledge and wisdom of our local elders and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is this knowledge and experience which ultimately underpins the vision of the bush healing farm. It is the foundational basis of the bush healing farm and without it the project would be unable to succeed. To capture this knowledge and build the community connections necessary for its success requires significant consultation and understanding, not least of which with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, who have driven the concept forward since they conceived the idea in 2002.

This is not to say that the years since the purchase of the land have been idle. In 2010 the first phase of a model of care was developed and endorsed, as I previously mentioned. In 2011 a principal consultant began work on design. In 2012 final sketch plans were completed. In 2013 a crown lease DA was approved. In 2014 we procured a head contractor. In 2015 there was a smoking ceremony and construction began. In late 2016 we completed the building. They are some of the quick highlights.

We are now waiting for work to be completed on an access road, but I fully expect that the bush healing farm will have a phased opening by around August of this year. Given how close we are to having services provided at the bush healing farm, it remains a priority for me. It is important to detail the service model to members and the kinds of activities that will occur there.

As I have said, it has never been the intention of the bush healing farm to be an alcohol or other drug rehabilitation centre. Some of this comes down to specific definitions. The bush healing farm is designed to address root-cause issues that lead to substance abuse and treatment relapses, with services revolving around reconnecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to land and culture with the aim of assisting them to better respond to life's challenges.

Ultimately, the purpose of the bush healing farm is to provide a place of healing whereby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will feel safe and supported by the traditional custodians, community leaders and elders, respected role models as well as cultural healers to make ongoing and meaningful change in their lives, and to break the cycle of drug and alcohol dependency.

As I mentioned earlier, this model of care is what is known as a therapeutic community, albeit one adapted to the unique circumstances of the ACT. A therapeutic community is one in which the residential community itself through self-help, targeted services and mutual support is the principal means for promoting personal change. The focus is on the behaviour that drives addictions, not on the clinical care of addictions.

It will be a significant new resource in the ACT for assisting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to help the healing journey of individuals and the development of attitudes and values that are the foundation of healthy living. There is growing evidence both within Australia and internationally that different approaches like this are successful in breaking the cycles that lead to addiction and in supporting individuals to recover from the underlying trauma and social problems that cause them to turn to drugs and alcohol in the first place.

The model seeks to understand the unique spiritual, physical, cultural, social, emotional and economic needs of people accessing the service. This is a fundamental shift in thinking in how to address alcohol and drug problems amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indeed, it has been noted in other contexts that this community-based healing approach is in contrast to the western approach to medicine which is focused on an individual and their disease.

We are not seeking to create a new form of alcohol and drug treatment. It is not and will not be an alternative to treatment. Rather, it is an additional step in a journey which seeks to cement a person's recovery from addiction and to provide them with the power to make new and more positive choices in their lives.

To this end, prior to entry into the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, each client must have already completed a program of alcohol and drug treatment and be free from alcohol and drugs. Further, they must also have no pending court cases, be at low risk of harm to self and others, not require further therapeutic services, or be stable. Each of the programs will: have a foundation based in local community and practice; address the social and cultural determinants of health for each client; imbue each client with a sense of social and emotional wellbeing; and provide life skills and training.

These programs will take the form of activities that clients can participate in, including life skills training, land management training, cultural programs, physical health and wellbeing programs and recreational activities. The exact nature of these programs is currently being determined by ACT Health in consultation with the bush healing farm advisory board and with advice from the Healing Foundation however I do understand that conversations are advancing rapidly.

To be fair, this approach is very new. To be sure, it is not without its criticism. However I am guided by the growing evidence from Australia and around the world that shows engaging with a person's culture and viewing their treatment through the lens of traditional healing and practices does produce results. To quote a literature review by the Healing Foundation:

Effective healing programs show positive impacts on individuals, families and communities in terms of self-worth and identity. The evidence in this review demonstrates that these have had a positive impact on health status and health disparities ... There are also positive impacts in terms of knowledge and skills acquisition by community members and the development of individual, family and community capacity.

This does not mean that the Ngunnawal bush healing farm will be the solution to all problems facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I am also not presenting it as a total answer to the problems in our communities with alcohol and other drugs. But the simple matter is that it would be folly continue to do more of the same and expect a different result. This is why we are working with our local community to deliver something different, to strengthen our existing alcohol and drug services and to get better outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the ACT.

I once again acknowledge and apologise for any miscommunication by the government and reiterate my intention to have services operating at the bush healing farm as soon as possible. I thank all members of the community who have had input to date and to the ongoing and weekly work of the advisory board.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.02): The Ngunnawal bush healing farm was first proposed some years ago, and it is fair to say that this facility has been a long time coming. I thank Mr Milligan for bringing this motion forward today because it is an important project. Given the recent debate I think it is appropriate that we discuss it in the Assembly today. The Greens recognise that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have completely valid frustrations about the delays in the process and the difficulties that have been encountered with the site lease and planning requirements. I welcome the minister's acknowledgement about the confusion caused, her shared frustration at the delays and that she is being very frank with the Assembly about acknowledging where things have not worked as she and the rest of us would have wished.

The question we now face is how to achieve the best outcome for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community moving forward. It is for this reason that the Greens will be supporting the amendments proposed by Minister Fitzharris. They acknowledge past mistakes and commit the government to clear time frames for reporting back to the Assembly on the next steps and plans for opening the facility later this year. It does this whilst retaining significant swathes of Mr Milligan's original motion. The amendments have not sought to gloss the situation and provide some clarity on the next steps forward. There is always a political filter about these things, and we have to be frank about that.

The Ngunnawal bush healing farm has the potential to be a real asset to the ACT's health system and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It can be a facility which offers holistic wraparound services which support the health, cultural, spiritual and social wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It can be one important part of a broader strategy to improve social and economic outcomes for Indigenous people in the territory. However, to date there has been a lack of clarity about the purpose and scope of the facility.

The question of whether the facility can provide any sort of clinical care is one that needs to be finally resolved. I acknowledge there are activities outside of the clinical sphere that can occur on the site that will help people with their healing journey, but there appear to be differing views on whether this fulfils the intended purpose of the facility as it was understood by the community.

I am encouraged to hear that the government is having regular and ongoing discussions with the Ngunnawal bush healing farm advisory board. The involvement and leadership of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are essential to finalising a model of care and creating a facility that will be culturally appropriate and suitable to the community's needs. All future work must be in line with the well-established principle of do it with us, not to us.

I truly believe the minister is committed to this approach, and that is why I am happy to support the amendments to the motion. I am also pleased that the minister's amendments clearly accept responsibility for the elements of the confusion added by the Health Directorate around the proposed model of care and offer an apology to the community for that.

Moving forward, it is important to provide as much certainty as possible about what services the facility will offer, details of the model of care and when services are expected to commence. I appreciate the minister's commitment to providing information to the Assembly in relation to the lease and the relevant uses for the site under the territory plan in such a timely manner. I also look forward to further details about the model of care and the estimated commencement date by the end of September.

It is important that in having this conversation we do not default to applying a deficit lens to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Struggles with drug and alcohol addiction are not unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Ngunnawal bush healing farm is being established to offer assistance to break the cycle of addiction for individuals who are likely to have experienced entrenched disadvantage. The facility is being established with this context in mind and to provide services that are culturally appropriate and relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Developing a service model that is led and controlled by Indigenous providers will have the greatest chance of success. We must continue to listen to Indigenous voices in order for this project to progress and become a true place of healing and wellbeing. This is certainly something I am mindful of in other spaces within my portfolio where we have just launched a justice reinvestment partnership with Winnunga Nimmityjah healthcare service. That is an example of where we have sought to work with the community to implement their views on what will be effective.

These are challenging projects. We have now received a recommendation through the Moss review that Winnunga operate health services inside the AMC. The merits of this are very clear, but we also need to be mindful of government accountability and government responsibility for these projects. At the end of the day it will be the minister who will be called on by the opposition to answer for it if something goes wrong. That is where in putting these partnerships together we need to work very carefully to give as much freedom as possible to the community providers but also ensure that the accountability—which tends to be held by the minister—lines are right. We must allow enough innovation and enough freedom to try new things but provide enough frameworks of accountability.

I appreciate the minister's very clear comments that it is important that we do not pit sections of the community against each other in pursuit of a shared cause. There may well be some differing views in our local Indigenous community as to the final model of care and program direction of the healing farm, but it is ultimately the government who has access to the various directorates' policy units, corporate history of the developments and resources to allocate towards research and exploration of best practice guidelines. I welcome the minister's very clear articulation of that today, and I think it is very important that we acknowledge that today.

Last week we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1967 constitutional referendum and the 25th anniversary of the Mabo decision, two historic moments that recognised

the important place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in our nation. They are a very important part of being very clear about the true history of this country. Last week was National Reconciliation Week and the theme was, “Let’s take the next steps”. At the same time Indigenous leaders from across Australia gathered at Uluru to call for their voices to be enshrined in the constitution. It has been a very significant time for issues of Indigenous affairs in Australia. While we must acknowledge that we still have a long way to go, we have an opportunity here with the bush healing farm to take a step forward. I certainly look forward to an update and news of opening of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm in the coming months.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (11.09): I thank Mr Milligan for bringing this very important matter to the attention of the Assembly today. I note the amendments proposed by the minister and Mr Milligan’s general agreement with them.

That having been said, I think that this is an important matter because this Labor government has created confusion and uncertainty over the whole issue of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm. Sadly, I think that I am the only member present who recalls when this became an issue when it was championed by a previous Chief Minister, Mr Stanhope, as far back as 2002 in this Assembly.

I recall the tortuous process that we have been through. There was the initial proposal that the Ngunnawal bush healing farm should be situated on the property known as Karma near William Hovell Drive in Belconnen. That was not considered suitable. There was the eventual purchase of the property at Miowera. There was the long-running saga in relation to objections from neighbours that resulted in a matter being taken to the ACAT in the ACT. And there were the ongoing issues that Mr Milligan has outlined in relation to the development of various models of care. Whether there were two, one—as at various stages—or four is a moot point, but there has been a lot of money spent on the development of models of care, some of which have been thrown out after a considerable amount of money has been spent on them.

Most recently, I had a departmental briefing, a very long overdue departmental briefing, from the health department where this issue was discussed. I was told at that time that we could not finalise the opening of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, for two reasons: that we had not finished the egress road, and that we had not resolved a model of care.

I questioned fairly closely the minister’s advisers and the staff who were present as to why we were resolving the model of care so late in the piece, and I was told that we just did not have a model of care even after all of this time. It turned out that we had. I was not advised of this during the departmental briefing, but Mr Milligan’s staff were able to point this out to me through other documentation. I think that is a little regrettable when I actually questioned them about why we did not have a model of care before we built the building. I got no response, but the minister here today has said that the initial 2010 model of care, in one of its iterations, informed the structure of the building. It goes to a very poor briefing that I received on this matter. I was effectively told that there was no model of care that informed the structure of the building that was finally built. The minister says that that was not the case, and I hope

it was not the case, but when I specifically asked these questions at a briefing, I was told the exact opposite. It goes to the quality of briefing.

This has been a real problem. The minister said two things. She did not intend to imply that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community were at fault or confused. She did not intend to imply that, and I will take her at her word. But I clearly heard the words from the Chief Minister—who did not imply; he actually said—that they were confused. He actually said that they were confused. It might be useful for the Chief Minister to come in here today and apologise as well. If he did not intend to use those words, he should apologise.

The other issue is that although I have never been the person in the Liberal Party responsible for overseeing the establishment of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, it has been my clear understanding from the outset—I, too, may be confused, Madam Assistant Speaker—that this was going to be an alcohol and other drug rehabilitation centre. It is quite clear. We even noticed in the budget papers yesterday, on page 24 of budget paper C, listed in the rollovers from 2015-16, an item called “Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm”. There is a footnote that says that previously this was entitled “Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Residential Alcohol and Other Drug Rehabilitation Facility”.

So somewhere along the line there has been a whole lot of confusion. When Jon Stanhope met with the Ngunnawal elders back in 2002, and in that period they were proposing a Ngunnawal bush healing farm, the clear message was that this would be a residential alcohol and other drug rehabilitation facility. It has been a clear message. It was such a clear message that it was recognised as such in the budget papers until this year.

There seems to be a real problem of lack of understanding. There is real confusion in the community. That real confusion stems from the model of care that was proposed in 2010. I have not read all of it, but I have read extensive parts of that model of care, and it is quite clear that that model of care was envisaged as a residential alcohol and other drug rehabilitation facility. The conversations that my office and I have had with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community make it clear that that is what they expected. And it is perfectly clear that when there was a walkout in May by Winnunga Nimmityjah from a meeting about the model of care, it was because their expectations were not being met.

It is timely that the minister comes in here and apologises for the confusion, but the apology for the confusion does not address the underlying issue about what the Ngunnawal bush healing farm is all about. What we seem to be seeing here is a bit of historical revisionism. It is a bit like the Stalinist situation where you airbrush people out of photographs. The budget papers have clearly changed the meaning. The budget papers that came down yesterday clearly show that there has been a strategic change in what the Ngunnawal bush healing farm does, because in their own notes on page 24 of budget statement C, it clearly says:

This initiative was previously titled “Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Residential Alcohol and Other Drug Rehabilitation Facility.”

What we have here today is a minister who has come in and done most of what Mr Milligan has agreed to, but at the end of this today we will not have a commitment to provide an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential alcohol and other drug rehabilitation facility. Whatever is now established out of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm will be something less than that. That was, clearly, never the expectation when the matter was raised and initially mooted by the Ngunnawal elders and Jon Stanhope in this place. It was clearly not what was proposed over many years; it was clearly not what was discussed at the interminable estimates inquiries about progress on this matter; and it was clearly not what led to privileges inquiries about issues and legal challenges about issues, both by residents who were nearby neighbours and by members of the health department against other people. There was a clear understanding, and somewhere we have had complete revisionist history.

What is worse is that for some time we have had what is effectively the empty hospital we saw in the *Yes Minister* episodes all those years ago. We have a building that exceeds specs and exceeded its budget, but is empty and is not providing a much-needed service for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this city.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (11.19), by leave: I thank members for giving me leave. I want to respond to some of the questions. I myself have referred to it as a rehabilitation centre. I think it is important here—I will state it as I did in my speech earlier—that we think of rehabilitation both with a capital R and with a small r. In my reference to the Ngunnawal bush healing farm being a centre for rehabilitation: it is to rehabilitate people from drug and alcohol dependency. There is no revisionism of history. I would like to state that Mrs Dunne's comments about a Stalinist revisionism of history were unnecessary, another example of overreach. We had had a reasonable discussion about that already. Obviously, as I also stated, many of us were not here.

My objective now is to have this facility open. I acknowledge that it is by no means ideal to have the facility completed while work still continues on the important access road. It is in a very rural setting which is quite a special setting here in the ACT.

There has never been an intention to mislead, but I certainly acknowledge that in some of these discussions, I myself am learning as we go about the different ways people define different terms.

To be very clear, it is my strong understanding that since its outset the Ngunnawal bush healing farm was about healing and a therapeutic contribution, an addition, to complement existing services and facilities in the ACT.

We already have a number of different facilities and services that provide input into a long process of rehabilitating people from drug and alcohol dependency. Whether we specifically refer to it as a rehabilitation centre with a capital R or a place in which part of the rehabilitation from drug and alcohol dependence takes place, in this case it has been clear in my statements that this centre is to add to the existing services. It is

not to replicate existing services, particularly clinical services that are already available in the community; it is to add to the services already provided. It will provide a unique opportunity for us to have a facility and services delivered that are rooted in connection with the land by our local Ngunnawal community that will break the cycle of drug and alcohol dependency. That has been the intention all along. I reject that we have changed anything from a rehabilitation centre. It is certainly my intention that it will function fully as a residential centre in time. It is likely that that will not be provided in the first phase of opening.

I would like to correct the record on any misunderstanding that may have been promulgated by Mrs Dunne that we are rewriting history. We acknowledge that it has not been ideal. We acknowledge that it is a long process. We acknowledge also that we are working very hard. The bush healing farm advisory board is meeting weekly in order to resolve this. I understand that that will not happen for a couple of weeks because a few key people are away. It is not the case that a lot of people walked away from this earlier this year.

In addition, people working from within ACT Health and other directorates throughout the ACT, important directorates that are involved overall in the health, wellbeing and success of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, continue to be involved on a very frequent basis, as do potential service providers.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.23): Today I presented a motion to the Assembly that called on the government to act in good faith for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT. In the last almost 15 years, the community has been waiting on the delivery of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. The need for this is urgent.

In amending the motion, the minister, Ms Fitzharris, apologised for causing the confusion, and we are thankful for that. At this time of national reconciliation, it is important for the government to apologise for the anxiety, anger and upset their false accusations have caused the community, so we are glad the government has had the courage to do what is right in this matter.

The government should table a time line of all costs involved in the building of the facility, including the costs for land purchase, building, land remediation, the access and egress road, bridge construction, legal advice and the development of models of care. We know already that the dollar costs have been significant. This should be a major consideration in the determination of final use of the property.

In Ms Fitzharris's amendments, she stated that the farm will go ahead, although it continues to be much delayed. What we are not clear on yet is the exact model of care to be delivered at the facility. The minister has promised to report on this in September. The community and I are looking forward to hearing what that will look like.

However, in the end, the answer to the problem of what the Ngunnawal bush healing farm should be used for seems to be quite simple. The community wants

desperately—in fact, they say urgently—a drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation centre in the ACT. It may be that the government should apply for a lease purpose variation. We have been promised a copy of the crown lease and variations this week, and I thank the minister for that. This will give us the details of what is permissible on the property.

However, a further variation to the lease would allow the current facility, as expressly built, to operate as a fully functional clinical rehab centre. This should deliver the model of care developed in response to the tender request. It would certainly make sense considering the phenomenal amounts of money spent on the development of this facility. It would also make sense if the government wants to avoid the accusation that it has built little more than a very expensive campsite. Alternatively, the government needs to commit to building or making available a new facility that will meet the immediate and urgent needs of the community.

The opportunity is here for the government to meet the ongoing and urgent needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT in the provision of a drug and alcohol rehab centre, whether on the bush healing farm property or as a new facility. I look forward to that happening with all urgency.

I thank my colleagues for speaking in support of my motion. The Canberra Liberals will support the motion as amended, but we look forward to receiving the information as promised by the minister and to a resolution of the issue of the Ngunnawal bush healing farm to the satisfaction of the community.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Community facilities zoned land—government transparency

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.27): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) this Government says it is committed to transparency in process and information;
- (b) former Chief Minister Katy Gallagher has stated that as a first principle information available to the Government should be made available for use by the community;
- (c) Mr Jack Waterford has said the ACT has the weakest FOI Act in Australia, possibly the world; and
- (d) in August last year, the Government passed a new Freedom of Information Act that Mr Rattenbury said will ensure the ACT is one of the most open jurisdictions in the country;

(2) further notes:

- (a) that in relation to a recent FOI request by the Leader of the Opposition for information on sites for the public housing renewal program, the Government provided a heavily redacted response with very substantial portions of documentation blacked out;
- (b) this response and this approach is contrary to the spirit of where the Government's own legislation is heading and is a stark refutation of its own transparency principles; and
- (c) this response is a compelling demonstration of a Government committed to a culture of secrecy and suppression of its public housing development intentions; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

- (a) provide this Assembly with details of all community facilities zoned land that is being considered for, or has been earmarked for development of public housing, by the end of this sitting week;
- (b) explain why so much secrecy is necessary on issues of vital and enduring concern to the community; and
- (c) demonstrate proper transparency and commitment to a genuine open government.

Can I start by assuring this Assembly, and indeed the wider ACT community, that we, the Canberra Liberals, are enormous supporters of public housing. As I have stated in this chamber on a number of occasions, including in my maiden speech, my very first residence was a state housing commission bonded asbestos house in Western Australia. I share the thoughts of the minister that we should all be proud to live in the jurisdiction that has the highest level of public housing per capita in the nation. As we see the housing affordability indicators continue to squeeze more and more families, it is my wish that this Assembly continue to do whatever it can to ensure that all Canberrans have the basic right of a roof over their head and the necessary support to lead fulfilling lives.

Although we seem to argue a bit in this place and in the wider communications space, although we seem to disagree vehemently on a number of things, the reality is that for the most part we agree on so many things within this space. This motion does not call upon the government to change any of its processes in regard to selection of sites for future public housing development. This motion is purely about transparency.

I would like to quote one of the nation's contemporary political leaders, if I could:

We'll be very clear on what is up for debate, so the people are in no doubt about what is open to change as a result of community feedback.

Those are the words of Chief Minister Andrew Barr in an editorial in the *Canberra Times* earlier this year and, without question, we support those words. This was the big community consultation editorial that the Chief Minister penned for the *Canberra Times*, and I found it in part refreshing to read. Let me repeat what the Chief Minister said:

We'll be very clear what is up for debate, so the people are in no doubt about what is open to change as a result of community feedback.

This motion is urging the Chief Minister to keep true to his words. Based on the large, redacted sections of the FOI request that the opposition leader's office received, it is very clear that dozens more community facilities zones were considered for the purpose of building medium to large public housing developments. In this age of transparency, clearly spelt out by the Chief Minister, it is imperative that we inform Canberrans right across this city what is planned for the community facilities zone close to them. All I am attempting to do here is assist the government in its community consultation. All I am saying is that we are all in this together; so in the spirit of tripartisanship, let us link arms and inform the public of the plans that this government has for their suburbs and for their neighbourhoods.

I say "tripartisanship", knowing that the Greens are always trumpeting transparency. Our two Greens members are so transparent that on some days I think I can see right through them. I am always, in all seriousness, hearing from Mr Rattenbury and Ms Le Couteur about community consultation, about transparency, about informing the community what is on the agenda. I am counting on Greens' support for this motion, because this motion simply fulfils the rhetoric that we hear constantly from those opposite and on the crossbench.

As a part of that process of moving forward, as a part of the process of letting go, I think it is important that the government explain to all of us why such levels of secrecy were necessary on these issues of vital importance. If you have nothing to hide, why would you be hiding anything?

Although the Chief Minister is continually talking about transparency and open government, there are those in the community who sense something a lot more sinister when it comes to secrecy from this government. I was reading a letter to the editor of the *Canberra Times* from a gentleman from Bruce the other day. I think his name was Jon. And this man Jon from Bruce suggested—

Mrs Dunne: Was that with an "h" or without an "h"?

MR PARTON: Without an "h". This man Jon from Bruce suggested that it was imperative that an independent integrity commission be established immediately here in the ACT because he has concerns about what has gone on behind the scenes. So in the spirit of transparency, in the spirit of this new age of open government, here is the chance for the government to put all the cards on the table.

We know that there was an explosion of community concern in Wright, Holder, Chapman and Mawson following the announcement of community facilities zones in those suburbs upon which public housing developments would be built. We know that many members of the Canberra community felt that they had been lied to and left out of the loop by that announcement.

This motion aims to head that sort of unrest off at the pass. All we are calling upon the government to do is tell us what other community facilities zones are and were being considered for this sort of development. If the government chooses not to support this motion, then we can only assume that every single community facilities zone is on that target list. In the spirit of community engagement and transparency, my name is Mark and I am here to help.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (11.33): I am happy to be able to rise to speak to this motion today because it allows the government to talk about the important reform that has been undertaken to further extend the concept of an open government. It gives me a chance to update the Assembly on the community engagement that continues for the current new public housing renewal sites.

I have tabled an amendment to the motion and I move the amendment that has been circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government is committed to transparency in process and information;
- (b) former Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher MLA, stated ‘that as a first principle information available to the Government should be made available for use by the community’;
- (c) in 2011, the ACT Government progressed an important reform agenda across government, which included:
 - (i) the publication of a weekly summary of cabinet proceedings;
 - (ii) a dedicated open government website providing a gateway for government information; and
 - (iii) establishment of a dedicated Government Information Office;
- (d) freedom of information (FOI) legislation was a key part of the 2012 Labor-Greens Parliamentary Agreement;

- (e) the Freedom of Information Act 2016, due to commence on 1 January 2018, will build on and enhance the Government's commitment to open, transparent government;
 - (f) the Government has provided \$954 000 in the 2017-18 Budget to support implementation of the new legislation;
 - (g) transparency and open government facilitate meaningful community engagement and are core components of a well-functioning democracy;
 - (h) best-practice community engagement involves ensuring that community members have a genuine influence over government decisions that affect them and are provided with the information needed to meaningfully participate and contribute;
 - (i) ACT Public Service agencies responding to FOI requests from the Canberra community do so independent of the political process and the Government of the day does not intervene; and
 - (j) the factors which may serve as a basis for redacting information are clearly set out in the Freedom of Information Act 1989 and include provisions such as those that protect the privacy of individuals; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) provide the following information to the Assembly on or before the first sitting day in August:
 - (i) the policy for using community facilities zoned (CFZ) land for social housing;
 - (ii) how many social housing dwellings are currently located on CFZ land; and
 - (iii) how many remaining undeveloped CFZ blocks exist across the ACT;
 - (b) continue its commitment to pre-DA consultation for all public housing development proposals on CFZ land; and
 - (c) continue to improve community engagement processes across the Government.”.

I agree to the government providing some additional detail about how we make decisions on what to build on community facilities zoned land and how much we have done across the ACT. My amendment also calls for agreement for the continuation of our commitment to undertake predevelopment application consultation for all public housing development proposals on community facilities zoned land. I will ensure that this information is provided by the next sitting period.

However, it is important to reflect directly on how the Freedom of Information Act operates for the community when they seek to make requests for government information. Freedom of information requests are an important part of our democratic process and demonstrate our commitment to transparency as we work to deliver on our goals of improving outcomes for public housing tenants.

The government is absolutely committed to transparency and openness. Former Chief Minister Katy Gallagher in 2011 made a statement on open government which came with several measures to increase transparency. This provided for freedom of information releases to be published online. A government information office was created to promote more access and use of digital information. Since that time this government has maintained its commitment to being open and transparent. The existing freedom of information laws and, more importantly, the culture and the efforts of this government to make information available have shown that to be true.

All members are aware that from 2018 a new freedom of information law will commence, bringing with it a renewed focus on transparency. This government provided additional resources of more than \$950,000 in the 2017-18 budget to support this new scheme. The funding will allow the Ombudsman to undertake new functions, including providing a review service to help resolve FOI disputes. Future funding will be determined by reference to the outcome of a review of the volume of work that is being undertaken. The new FOI Act will further strengthen the community's right to access government-held information unless, on balance, releasing the information would be contrary to the public interest.

As with the open government statement in 2011, the government is investing resources and effort in making the new FOI law work for people. Within the public service, a robust program of implementation work is underway, which includes preparing internal guidance about the application of the public interest test, the obligations of ministers under the new act and the definition of an agency's policy documents; a communications strategy to promote understanding across the service; and, in consultation with the ACT Government Solicitor's Office, developing and piloting practical training for ACT public service staff about how to apply the public interest test. This government has always demonstrated and will continue to demonstrate its commitment to openness: in its commitments by its resources and through its legislation.

On public housing renewal, more than 430 homes have been completed as part of the public housing renewal program, highlighting the ACT government's continued commitment to this significant program of renewal. We are continuing to make a real difference to the lives of our tenants by improving the quality of the housing in which they live.

Six sites recently announced at Monash, Mawson, Chapman, Wright and Holder are not the first instances of public housing being developed on community facilities zoned land. Housing ACT has already got more than 340 supportive housing properties on community facilities zoned land, forming part of the public housing portfolio. This

includes two developments already completed by the public housing renewal task force in Monash and Chisholm and a third site is under construction at Nicholls.

The ACT government is also building and purchasing replacement sites on other sites throughout Canberra and, while there are no current proposals for public housing to be developed on other community facilities zoned sites, we are seeking out sites for public housing in new as well as established suburbs.

Consistent with our goal of spreading public housing more evenly throughout this city, we are providing new public housing in suburbs close to Northbourne Avenue, whilst also delivering public housing in other areas of the ACT from Gungahlin all the way through to Tuggeranong. By developing a mix of public housing types in a range of locations, we are supporting tenants from all walks of life with their different needs.

The spread of replacement public housing across our city also supports us in delivering lower density public housing. We are providing a mix of freestanding homes, small groups of townhouses and units and compact homes. The small groups of public housing we are delivering are significantly smaller than the existing multiunit concentrations of hundreds of public housing dwellings in single complexes.

The public housing renewal task force has been working to identify possible locations for replacement public housing dwellings over several years. There has been a process of continual analysis and refinement of possible locations. During this time a large number of sites on territory-owned land have been considered. The process has required assessment of opportunities and constraints for each of those sites, and this includes zoning and planning requirements, proximity to existing public housing, proximity to services and amenities, site features including slope and any other uses for the site that may have been identified.

There is also extensive due diligence work undertaken to check whether these sites are suitable for particular types of development. This includes a range of studies such as traffic assessments. Many of the sites were not considered suitable to progress at the time and information about them has not been distributed. The process that we undertake to find the most suitable land is not about secrecy. It is common for any proposed new development to be considered and all options refined and then made available in furthering that development.

The ACT government rigorously assessed all options available before selecting these sites which are suitable and appropriate to discuss with the community. Over the past few weeks we have actively sought community feedback which is continuing to shape the design, layout and style of the homes that we would like to build for some of our most vulnerable Canberrans. Our conversations about these sites on community facilities zoned land are ongoing. There have been and continue to be regular, facilitated engagement sessions with community groups and self-selected representatives from each community. The ACT government is responding to the feedback that we are getting from these groups.

These discussions have been very productive and outcomes of these meetings have been distributed to the broader community through site-specific communiques and

online updates. In particular I have been happy to hear that some of these groups are looking for ways to welcome public housing tenants into their communities. This is a sign to me that we really are continuing to develop a more inclusive community and, I believe, supports the finding that more than seven in 10 Canberrans are in favour of continued inclusion of public housing in their suburb. Public housing remains critically important in the ACT and the new homes constructed as part of this program will help us continue to improve outcomes for vulnerable Canberrans, members of our community who have a range of housing and support needs which are unable to be met by the private rental market.

I wish to emphasise once more that the renewal program is about supporting public housing tenants and improving the quality of public housing in creating an even more inclusive Canberra. This government remains committed to our objectives in this regard and we will continue to deliver on this important program.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.42): This is an interesting motion which talks about a number of important values. Looking first at what is noted in Mr Parton's motion, in general we agree. In the Seventh Assembly I moved a motion about open government which was supported by the Liberal Party. Yes, tick that. With respect to paragraph (1)(c), I note that Mr Waterford's comments were made before the new legislation and, I believe, do not refer to that. As Mr Parton said, in August last year the government passed a new Freedom of Information Act. It was passed, as I understand it, with the agreement of all three parties in the Assembly, importantly, including the Liberal Party, which is really great.

Ms Berry's amendment contains a lot more detail about the current situation for the ACT government with respect to transparency in process and information. I commend its contents to the Assembly.

Looking at the new FOI legislation, there is a public benefit test that relates to all FOI decisions and it places a duty on ACT government agencies and ministers to proactively publish government information unless it is contrary to the public interest to do so. This recognises, of course, that government information is a public resource and aims to minimise the need for members of the public, or, importantly, from our point of view, members of the Assembly, to file FOI requests simply to access unpublished government information. One of the things that is, I would have to say, incredibly annoying is when you know a report exists and it has not been published.

It is also very important to point out, as Ms Berry did, that under the current FOI procedures, for FOI requests directed at government agencies, it is the agencies themselves that decide how to respond to FOI requests. If they make any redactions, under FOI laws there has to be a clear reason for these. These reasons are enumerated in the legislation which, I understand, was unanimously passed in the last Assembly.

As well as supporting free provision of government information the Greens, and I of course, unambiguously support increased public housing. The ACT Greens believe access to safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing is a human right and is

essential for health and social equity. The ACT has the second highest rate of homelessness in Australia. There is absolutely no question, I would have thought, that Canberra needs more affordable and public housing.

Clearly, there is more than one value here. There is the value of open provision of government information. There is also the value of our government operating effectively, and operating effectively in the provision of public housing. I think what we are seeing here is two values colliding, and decisions have been made.

Mr Parton's paragraph (3)(a) reads:

provide this Assembly with details of all community facilities zoned land that is being considered for, or has been earmarked for development of public housing, by the end of this sitting week;

I absolutely understand why people would feel they want that. If you are living somewhere that happens to be near community facilities zoned land, you want to know what is happening in your neighbourhood. It is a request that people could reasonably make. But I also understand why the government is simply not in a position to give this information. I would assume that at some time over the long history of Housing ACT it has considered virtually all of Canberra—except, I would assume, the Namadgi national park—as a possible site at some stage for public housing.

Remember that most of Canberra's housing was originally public housing. So to ask about areas that have been considered as possible sites for public housing is an absolutely huge ask. I really do not think it is a practical or useful ask given that it would have to encompass an awful lot of Canberra. Okay, the lakes are out; I do not think we have looked at boat sites. But most of Canberra, of course, would have been looked at and deemed unsuitable. I have been told, in fact, that Housing ACT has one staff member whose full-time job it is to look at the allhomes website for possible options for public housing. I know that Housing ACT are taking the vision of public housing seriously and they are looking at reasonable options. And that is the job that we expect them to do. We expect them to do this effectively. We do not expect them to, each day, provide a list of websites they have looked at. That is just ridiculous, basically. We need to have efficient and effective administration of public housing.

The issue also is that once the government has made the decision that “this is a live option”, as it were, it needs to properly communicate that to the community. I think that is the point. The question that we all need to debate and consider is how we ensure that that consultation happens about things that are real options, so that the community's time and the government's time are not wasted by mentioning every bureaucrat's passing thought bubble. That will not help anybody. That will just overload people with—I was going to say information, but it is not even information; it is irrelevancies. It is just not relevant.

The bottom line is that Housing ACT has a program to provide 1,288 new homes, and the issue is where and how to replace them. An issue clearly is whether some or all of it, or any of it, should be built on community facilities zoned land. We have a limited

supply of this land, particularly in the new suburbs, which often have much less of this type of land than older ones. That land supply is, of course, a long-term community asset, and it needs to cater for community issues such as community halls, places of worship, schools and so on for years to come.

Importantly, we should all reflect that in fact not all community zoned land, possibly without a Territory Plan amendment, could be used for public or supportive housing. I think it was a 2011 amendment—someone can correct me if I am wrong—for which, for a number of community facilities zoned sites, there was an overlay saying “not for housing”. I am afraid I did not have time to research the long history of amendments and see exactly which one that was, but there is quite a lot of community facilities zoned land which specifically has been excluded from any possibility of housing. It is important that the community realises this. It is in no way open slather, and this issue has been thought about. Whether it has been thought about adequately is, of course, a debatable question, but it has been thought about. This is clearly a real issue. We want more public housing, we want more community facilities, and we have a limited land supply. How we balance that is a difficult question.

I, or more precisely my office, have had considerable discussions with Ms Berry’s office about this motion, and I am pleased that Ms Berry’s amendment calls on the government to continue to commit to pre-DA consultation for all public housing development proposals on community facility zoned land. This addresses some of the community’s concerns about being properly consulted before the government decides to develop public housing on community facilities zoned land.

We need to have an open and transparent debate in which the government explains to the whole Canberra community how important public housing renewal is. We should be openly discussing the challenges of finding enough land and the community should be invited to help find a solution, while ensuring there is the right balance between providing public housing for those in need and protecting the land needed for community buildings, parks and shared public spaces. This should not be a debate just for the people of Weston Creek. It should be a debate for all of the people of Canberra.

What has happened in Canberra over the years is that we have had a steadily decreasing proportion of public housing. I understand it is down to six per cent now. When the Liberals were last in power here, they sold off around 3,000 public housing dwellings, and we have not managed to increase our numbers since then. It was not that long ago, within living memory, when we were at around 30 per cent public housing in Canberra. We need to have a community debate about what is appropriate, what, as a community, we would like to do to support the vulnerable members of our community. It should not be a debate just for Weston Creek or the people who are living next to potential new community housing developments. It should be a debate for the whole community.

The Greens obviously support good community consultation. On this issue, it has been particularly hard, because as well as the issues that some people have with public housing, there has been the issue whereby communities have lived next to a block of land which has been vacant basically for as long as the suburb has been there. To find

any development there, it would generate a lot of negative reactions. But in this case we have had a toxic combination of people being concerned about public housing, being very concerned and surprised that their neighbourhood is changing, and the public consultation not being as good as it could or should be. It has been a toxic combination, and it is really unfortunate that it has come to this.

In the future we need to have better community consultation, and we need to have broader community consultation about how we as a community feel about homelessness, the provision of affordable housing and the provision of social housing. I would hope that there would be a community consensus that this is important and that it is something that we need to continue to put resources to.

The Greens will be supporting Ms Berry's amendment, but I thank Mr Parton for this motion, because this is an issue that will continue—

Mr Hanson: Shame. Shame, Caroline.

MS LE COUTEUR: to require real debate, not just saying “shame”.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.54): I am pleased to talk to this important motion brought forward by my colleague Mr Parton today in relation to information gained under an FOI request. FOIs are very important. They give us the information that we are entitled to. A democratic government should be run for and by the people, not just those in the elected office. There is machinery like FOI working in the background to ensure that information is made available to the public. This ensures accountability, and makes sure that people in any type of public office cannot abuse their power, because they have the knowledge that their actions could come before the public eye.

FOI keeps citizens in the know about what is going on in their government. It allows individuals to see what information the government holds, and to seek correction of that information if they consider it to be wrong or misleading. I am not talking here about personal information, because the FOI legislation sets out very clearly the instances where personal information should not be included.

FOI enhances the transparency of policymaking, administrative decision-making and government service delivery, and that is why it is important. A community that is better informed can participate more effectively in the democratic process. The information gathered by the government at public expense is, in effect, a public resource that should be available to the public more widely.

Information that is held by the government is a very powerful tool. We must all be held accountable for our actions and ensure that we have transparency of information. I refer to the recent example where the Leader of the Opposition put in an FOI request about the use of CF zones for potential public housing, and it came back very heavily redacted. In some cases the information was barely understandable, legible or able to be read. It begs the question why perhaps it was not just denied in the first place.

I would like to go back to the object of the Freedom of Information Act. It states:

The object of this Act is to extend as far as possible the right of the Australian community and, in particular, the citizens of the Territory, to access to information in the possession of the Territory by—

- (a) making available to the public information about the operations of agencies and, in particular, ensuring that rules and practices affecting members of the public in their dealings with agencies are readily available to persons affected by those rules and practices; and
- (b) creating a general right of access to information in documentary form in the possession of Ministers and agencies, limited only by exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential public interests and the private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom information is collected and held by agencies.

So, reading directly from the object of the act, it quite clearly sets out that things affecting members of the public should be readily available to the persons affected by those rules and practices.

In the last sitting period, back in May, we had a debate on a similar and related topic about the use of community facilities zones. We talked about the fact that CF zones are vital for the community. They are designed, according to the zoning, to be used for things like places of worship, childcare centres, libraries, outdoor recreation facilities and green spaces. People want and expect to have these types of facilities close to them. One of the benefits of living in such a lovely place as Canberra is that many of us are lucky enough to have those spaces close to us, or we are aware that there is a space nearby zoned for community facilities. So we have a potential future enjoyment of those CF zones.

In this instance, as we discussed in the last sitting, it appears that the government is taking those zones away for what in effect is a residential purpose. The sad part is that our public housing tenants also have an expectation of access to those community facilities type zones, and they are being taken away from everyone in that community.

That brings me back to the point that those opposite are trying hard to make this an argument about opposition to public housing, and that is not what this is about. It demonstrates, if you like, the paucity of their argument, the fact that they are unable to back up what they are saying by this name-calling across the chamber, saying that we are anti public housing.

We have all heard from many people in this place their own personal experiences of public housing. Ms Berry, not long ago, talked about the fact that most Canberrans are in favour of public housing in their suburb. I do not think there is any doubt about that. But this particular argument is not about public housing in our suburb. It is about taking away potential community facilities and it is about transparency and accountability of the government to the public.

The motion today calls on the government to provide the Assembly with details of all the community facilities zoned land that is being considered for or has been earmarked for development of public housing. This is information that is readily available. I take the point in the amendment moved by Ms Berry that the government do not direct government departments what to release in FOI requests, but the government can still release this information if they so choose.

There is reference in the amendment circulated by Ms Berry to factors that serve as a basis for redacting information, as clearly set out in the FOI Act. I can read out some of those bases for exempt documents. They include documents exempt under the commonwealth act, documents affecting relations with commonwealth and states, executive documents, internal working documents, documents affecting enforcement of the law and protection of public safety, documents affecting national security, defence or international relations, documents to which secrecy provisions of enactments apply, documents affecting financial or property interests of the territory, documents concerning certain operations of agencies, documents affecting personal privacy, documents subject to legal professional privilege, documents relating to business affairs et cetera, documents affecting the economy, documents containing material obtained in confidence, documents the disclosure of which would be in contempt of the Legislative Assembly or a court, certain documents arising out of companies and securities legislation, and electoral rolls and related documents.

From a very simplistic reading, it would not appear that providing this information would contravene any of those, except exempt documents. In fact, at some point the information about the location of these planned facilities will be in the public domain, when a DA process and a consultation process take place. Obviously, there is a point by which time it will be in the public domain, anyway.

In fact, this was referred to in one of those documents. One of the points that was not redacted was the public housing task force minutes, which referred to the fact that consultation would be required because of expected community outcry about these proposals. It is already there in the public domain, so why can't we have this conversation? Why can't we provide the information to the public to start that discussion? It is because the government is hiding behind a veil of secrecy. It is time for the government to lift that veil of secrecy. It is vital for the confidence of the community—a community that is fed up with the secrecy that is going on with this government.

I believe the government should make the public aware of their intention for the use of CFZ land. They need to be open and accountable, and make the public aware of the information that was redacted about which community facilities zoned pieces of land will be used for housing. The government need to support the FOI Act and make available to the public information about the operations of agencies, as is quite clearly stated in the object of the act.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (12.05): I move the following amendment to Ms Berry's proposed amendment:

Insert new paragraph (2)(a)(iv):

“(iv) details of all CFZ land that is being considered for, or has been earmarked for development of public housing;”.

My amendment is fairly simple and fairly straightforward and I will keep the remarks relatively short. Simply, all it is seeking to do is insert a new clause 2(a)(iv) which calls on the minister to detail all the community facilities land that is being considered for or has been earmarked for development for public housing. This will unequivocally clear the matter up, and give the community some confidence in and ultimately an element of transparency to the process by which community facilities land is being chosen and selected to develop social housing on.

This call is certainly consistent with the notes that Ms Berry is seeking to amend the motion with. Ms Berry’s point (g) is:

transparency and open government facilitate meaningful community engagement and are core components of a well-functioning democracy;

It seems here today, though, that we are having a debate over a lack of transparency, which would then determine the opposite: that this is in fact not a well-functioning democracy, Madam Speaker.

Ms Berry’s notes also call on the Assembly to take note that providing information will allow citizens to meaningfully participate and contribute in the debate. If residents do not know what the government’s proposed land use is for vacant community facilities zoned land in their suburb, how can they possibly participate actively in this debate, without knowing what is earmarked for development just around the corner from where they live?

By taking course, if the minister does come back and actually say, “Look, here’s a list of blocks that were considered; these are blocks that aren’t under consideration any further”, it will give the minister an opportunity to clear the record and say that there is a number of sites that were once considered but are not now being considered.

I think that this way forward is much better than simply releasing the document into the public arena without any commentary. This gives the minister the opportunity to say, “This is what was considered, this is what’s still under consideration, and this is what we’ve progressed with.” I think it is quite an easy, sensible and common-sense way forward.

The documents that the opposition is referring to are largely agenda documents for the public housing renewal steering committee. I think it is appropriate at this point to seek here Ms Le Couteur’s and the Greens’ position on what they are going to do here. You do not need to go back very far to find that Mr Rattenbury once held a very contrary position to this; and it was, funnily enough, on the eve of an election.

On the last sitting day of the Eighth Assembly in the debate on FOI legislation, Mr Rattenbury said:

With regard to minutes of the various government boards, councils and committees and other bodies, as members know, we have quite a range of these types of bodies, from the child death review committee and the cemeteries board to the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. There are all sorts of these committees across the government. They all perform a function in the governance of the territory and we should be able to know what they are doing. Rather than members having to ask questions about the various committees or accepting the minister saying that the advice of a particular committee is X or Y, we should be able to see what they are actually doing.

Madam Speaker, it seems that “hypocrisy, thy name is Green”. It is evident that before an election, as members in this place run to the polls, they will say and do anything about transparent, open and consultative government. When push comes to shove post election, they are happy to walk away from those commitments and do as they always have done and hide behind the secrecy veil.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (12.09): Given that we are discussing the FOI legislation, I think it is important to remind members, particularly in light of Mr Wall’s twisting of my words that he has just gone through, of what the new FOI legislation does, because it was the Greens who spent the entire four-year period of the last term negotiating with the other members of this chamber to get new FOI legislation. It did take us the better part of four years and it came right before the election, but that is only because it took so long to get the rest of the members of this chamber to focus on coming to an agreement on what the FOI legislation should be.

Let us recall what that FOI legislation does. I will do it quickly; I am mindful of the time today. This bill does two key things: it introduces an open-access scheme to establish processes for the regular disclosure of government reports and information, and it makes the public interest the test for what information is released to the community.

I could go on, and I have spoken at great length in this place about that information. That is quite different from Mr Wall coming in here and twisting my words in the way he has. I think Ms Le Couteur made a very clear point—

Mr Wall: What did I twist?

MR RATTENBURY: We listened to Mr Wall, Mr Parton, Mr Hanson and Ms Lawder in silence.

Mr Hanson: I have not spoken.

MR RATTENBURY: No, but we listen to Mr Hanson’s interjections in silence. Because he makes them so regularly, I get confused. Mr Hanson interjects so often, I think he has actually spoken in the debate—but there you go.

Ms Le Couteur made a very clear point: it is one thing to come in here and actually give information on things that are being contemplated—and she made the very clear

point that when there is a real issue on the table we should have very clear consultation. We should have early consultation. It should be done in an open way with the community. But what Mr Wall is suggesting we should do is that every time a public servant undertakes a piece of research it should be made available. I do not think that that is a real and valid thing.

So it is not right for him to twist—and Mr Parton is going to do it again, I am sure, in his closing remarks—Ms Le Couteur’s words in a way to serve his political agenda, because she has been absolutely clear and the Greens are very clear in our position. When there is a process in train, when a view has been formed that a proposal should be put to the community, it is right that that consultation happens early and that it happens thoroughly.

But it is not right—and I am sure he is going to do this in his interpretation—that any piece of research is an agenda on the part of the government. They are two quite different things. I think the Liberal Party needs to be honest with the community about the positions that have been taken in this debate.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (12.12): I was not going to speak but, given that my words are being critiqued for remaining silent, I may as well say something to try to give Mr Rattenbury some legitimacy for his critique of my silence.

I commend Mr Parton, Ms Lawder and Mr Wall for what they are endeavouring to achieve here. If you go to the quote that Mr Wall just made regarding the FOI legislation that was debated last year: as Mr Rattenbury just said, it is about the public interest. Fundamentally that is what this is about: the public interest.

The question before us fundamentally is: would releasing this information be in the public interest? I have spoken to many people about this issue out in the community, through the affected suburbs, and it is without question their desire—it is in the public interest—that the community know what community zoned sites are being considered for public housing.

We know that there has been an uproar. There has been a real view from those affected suburbs at the moment that they have been misled. I can point to letters written by Mrs Jones to Mr Barr asking if there were any plans for the PANDSI site. He denied it twice.

We know that this has caused real disquiet, disharmony, which is not good for anybody. There is no good outcome from that for the public housing tenants who will potentially eventually arrive in that location or anyone else. So what we are simply saying is that there is a list of community facilities zoned sites that are being considered, and the public has a right to know.

The public has a right to know. It is their land. It is community land by its very name. And for the Greens to come to this place and say, “We are going to deny the public what is clearly in the public interest,” is shameful. We should all in this place listen—

Mr Rattenbury: Twist it to your agenda.

MR HANSON: And Mr Rattenbury is interjecting now—always the great condemner of interjections.

Mr Rattenbury: You are twisting our words to suit your agenda.

MR HANSON: He is having a go, Madam Speaker. He is a bit upset. But if Mr Wall quoted correctly, which I am sure he did, verbatim, then that is not a twisting of the words. Mr Rattenbury just talked here about this being about what is in the public interest. I cannot see, then, how Ms Le Couteur and Mr Rattenbury can deny this information which is clearly in the public interest. They know it. They know it and their actions here today are shameful.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (12.14): I will close the debate, in part because Mr Rattenbury was looking forward to hearing the closing address here. Madam Speaker, in the time that I have been looking after this housing portfolio I have had dozens of conversations with public housing advocacy groups, with community groups and with public housing providers right around the country. And I have not had a single person in that space concur with the minister's definition of supportive housing.

I think that that is at the centre of this debate. I think that all of us here in this chamber are well aware that the public housing developments that are mooted for Wright, Holder, Chapman and Mawson most likely could have been overturned if not for the technical amendment made to the Territory Plan in December of 2015. Certainly the FOI documentation that we have received supports that view.

If the Territory Plan's intention was for public housing to be built on community facilities zoned land it would clearly say among the list of things to be built there "public housing", and it does not. Leaving aside any arguments about the merits of that amendment and leaving aside the basic argument that a technical amendment by its nature is not supposed to change the substance of the plan, I think it is clear that the government now has at its disposal a mechanism to build public housing developments in places where once it did not.

If, for the purpose of this motion, we are to just accept: "Here's one that you got away with", I think we must accept that it is not in the original spirit of the Territory Plan. Most importantly, the construction of public housing developments on community facilities zoned land is well outside of the community expectation of what can or should be constructed in that space. We are actually here advocating for the community.

Ms Le Couteur told us that she can fully understand that the people in the suburbs want to know whether the government is considering building a public housing complex on a community facilities zone over the road from them. So she can understand the anguish. She can understand the confusion for those people. But she is not prepared to do anything about it.

If we accept that the government can just bully its way through on this front and build whatever it wants on community facilities zones, then I think it is so important for the government to face up to the community, to come clean and tell the people what it intends to do and where it intends to do it.

I commend Minister Berry for the spirit of her amendments. In this place it is up to us on this side to scrutinise what is going on on the other side, and I think it is very clear, on the basis of those amendments, that the minister has listened to the concerns that we have raised.

But certainly I agree fully with the amendment to the amendment from Mr Wall. After the recent community consultation debacles in Weston Creek I spoke to a family who were dismayed that they had, only weeks prior to the government's public housing announcement, purchased a house very close to a community facilities zone, believing that a community facilities zone would either be left vacant or be a genuine community facility. Together today we can stop that situation from happening by just being honest with the people and telling them what you intend to do.

Question put:

That **Mr Wall's** amendment to **Ms Berry's** proposed amendment be agreed to.

Ayes 9

Noes 12

Mr Coe	Mr Milligan	Ms Berry	Ms Le Couteur
Mrs Dunne	Mr Parton	Ms Burch	Ms Orr
Mr Hanson	Mr Wall	Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay
Mrs Kikkert		Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury
Ms Lawder		Ms Fitzharris	Mr Steel
Ms Lee		Mr Gentleman	Ms Stephen-Smith

Question resolved in the negative.

Ms Berry's amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 12.23 to 2.31 pm.

Questions without notice

Budget—rates

MR COE: My question is for the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the budget released yesterday included a 12 per cent increase in 2017-18 in revenue from residential general rates, after which the increases are 10.5 and nine per cent. Chief Minister, do the forward estimates for residential rates include increases to the marginal rating factors for each year or do the projections assume that the current marginal rating factor applies across the forward estimates?

MR BARR: Yes, there are a number of factors that are impacting on the revenue increase for rates in the city, the first of which is tax reform, a transition away from stamp duty to the rates base. The marginal rating factors are determined on a year-by-year basis to ensure principles of equity within the rates system so that higher valued land attracts a higher charge as there is a very close correlation between the value of land people live on and their wealth and income. Unsurprisingly, there is a close correlation. It is not a perfect correlation, but there is a close correlation, particularly with wealth. But also there is a very strong correlation with income.

What the Leader of the Opposition neglected to mention in his question is, of course, that the total number of properties in the territory continues to grow each year; hence revenue grows in advance of the percentage rate of increase of rates each year because there are more rate-paying properties.

MR COE: Chief Minister, would you please advise what assumption there is in the forward years for the number of dwellings and also what assumption there is for the forward estimates regarding the amount of the increase or the total that comprises the transition from stamp duty?

MR BARR: The rate of increase that is assumed is very closely linked to the population growth rate increase in the territory. The exact number I would need to take on notice, but there is a factor of increase. We are anticipating the equivalent of eight additional suburbs in Canberra over the next four years. That is the equivalent of adding Weston Creek to our city's population. So it will go from 400,000 people as we are now to around 425,000 to 430,000 people over the next four years.

Our revenue projections are updated in the mid-year update and in the budget each year. So they are updated every six months. The Leader of the Opposition can wait till the next budget update for the answers to his question.

MRS JONES: Chief Minister, do the forward estimates include annual increases in the average unimproved value of properties? If so, what are those increases?

MR BARR: Yes, the average unimproved value of properties is undertaken for rating purposes on a rolling three-year cycle. Significant fluctuations year to year are smoothed out by the fact that there is a rolling three-year cycle. But the way the system works is that a level of revenue is determined, all properties in the city then have their average unimproved value, and that is shared amongst all of the properties. So if values go up in one part of the city over another, and we have certainly seen that in the context of land values associated with a significant transport project, that part of the city pays a greater share of the overall rates burden. That is what is happening in Canberra at the moment. Those who have looked at the detail of the impact of rate increases in recent times would note that land values have increased significantly in the inner north and in central Canberra in particular. So the greatest burden of increase has fallen on those highest value pieces of land.

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mr Coe: On relevance: the supplementary that Mrs Jones put forward was, in effect, what are the assumptions for the outyears in the budget with regard to the average unimproved value. I ask the Chief Minister to be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Coe. There is no point of order. I think the Chief Minister made the points about unimproved value. Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Budget—justice and community safety portfolio

MS LEE: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, yesterday's budget has a cut of \$4.9 million over four years to your directorate to be achieved through portfolio efficiencies and administrative improvements. This is at time of increasing concern over terrorism, organised crime and cyber security. Attorney, what are the portfolio efficiencies and administrative improvements that will cover this cut?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Lee for the question. There are a number of ways in which the directorate will continue to work to improve the efficiencies. Those are often still being negotiated through and planned through. That is a matter of ongoing work with the directorate. But one of the important things to note is the significant improvements that have been made in relation to—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Berry: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker I just heard a member of the opposition refer to the Attorney-General in an unparliamentary manner. He should apologise and withdraw.

Mr Hanson: In response to the point of order, it was I who interjected. What I said was “the Ramsay razor gang”. I am not sure if that is unparliamentary or not. I seek your ruling, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order but I will remind Mr Hanson of the number of times he interjects through question time and, I think, collectively patience is running very thin on his interjections. Attorney-General.

MR RAMSAY: I would like to point out that in relation to the work that is going on in the directorate and within my portfolio there are some very significant investments as part of the budget. We are pleased to have the work going on in relation to the community legal centres, the increased funding in relation to legal aid and the increased funding in relation to the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as the

ongoing funding of the Eastman trial. There is a range of ways in which the community can continue to remain sure that what we have is a safe and protected community.

MS LEE: Attorney, with a directorate that is already stressed, how can the people of Canberra be assured that front-line services for safety, security and law enforcement will not be cut?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Lee for the supplementary. I note that in a number of areas work within this directorate is also within the area of responsibility of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I would also like to point out that as part of the budget there has been increased funding for additional police in relation to the liquor reform package that we have announced.

One of the things going on is that we have continued to work to develop the ongoing safety, the ongoing enjoyment of this city. There is a range of ways that the increased funding for the Director of Public Prosecutions is occurring. We are very confident that the people of Canberra can continue to enjoy a safe, secure and vibrant city.

MR HANSON: In light of increasing contemporary threats, why is your directorate facing any cuts at all?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. All directorates are able to continue to increase their efficiencies, and the directorate within my portfolio is one of those. There are a number of ways: with increased efforts and energies around technology, increased efficiencies, new ways of cooperating across this directorate and others. It is no different from any others, and we continue to improve and to also work for the safety of Canberra.

Budget—women

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Treasurer and relates to the budget. Treasurer, did any of your budget considerations include specific modelling to gauge its impacts on women?

MR BARR: The government, through the budget process, assesses a wide range of expenditure and capital works bids through an exhaustive process of deliberation. Some of those bids will involve the commissioning of some additional work, either at the beginning of the business case development process or during cabinet's deliberations. It depends a little on what you mean by modelling. That can have many different interpretations or applications depending on the nature of a particular budget bid.

Certainly the cabinet considers each business case on its merits and various ministers, whether it be from a portfolio perspective or a whole-of-government perspective, ensure that the views of women and the benefits of particular projects for women are taken into account in their assessment.

MS LE COUTEUR: What, if any, initiatives focus on reducing the gender pay gap and improving female participation in the workforce?

MR BARR: There are a number of specific initiatives contained within the budget. I refer the member to budget paper 3 for the details. These include programs in emergency services and in non-traditional trades. Within the ACT public sector we continue our work, which has been very successful over the past 10 years or so, to reduce the gender pay gap.

MRS JONES: Minister, what measures does the budget have to improve safety of women in Woden and other town centres? Are there any measures to improve access for women to portaloos if working on fires? And do we have any funding for locks on breastfeeding room doors?

MR BARR: I thank Mrs Jones for the question. The details to all of those are found in the budget papers or in the answers my colleagues have given to the same questions that have been asked previously.

Budget—transport and city services portfolio

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, yesterday's budget has a \$5.3 million cap to your directorate over four years to be achieved through portfolio efficiencies, including adjusting service levels. The *Canberra Times* reports that the directorate will use customer feedback to determine the cuts to service levels. Minister, could you elaborate on the process of using customer feedback to determine cuts to service levels?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Doszpot for the question and note that his reading of the budget papers is correct but I would not always be informed on how the *Canberra Times* may interpret that. That was a question asked in the media lock-up yesterday.

There is a range of ways that we will deliver some efficiencies within the Transport Canberra and City Services portfolio. But, most importantly, we are actually significantly increasing services levels. We are increasing mowing; we are increasing weeding; and we are investing in our town centres, in particular Tuggeranong and Gungahlin, and also the Kambah Village. We are about to start work at Gartside Street in Erindale. There is work underway with the Belconnen bikeway. In addition we will be increasing our graffiti removal; not to mention, of course, introducing stage one of light rail. Two new rapids are proposed in this calendar year to add to the already extensive bus services that we provide right across the territory.

We use customer feedback on an ongoing basis. We are actively working within the initiatives that were outlined in the budget yesterday to significantly improve how we engage more thoroughly and deeply with a broad range of people in our community. We will continue to be informed by community feedback. As members know, Transport Canberra and City Services get possibly the highest volume of customer and community feedback of all directorates on a very regular basis, because it is so

important to Canberrans. We will also be looking at improving the way we specifically talk with our customers and with the community about more innovative ways that we can deliver public services and city services right across the territory.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, is customer feedback a reliable basis for indicating where to cut service levels?

MS FITZHARRIS: At no point did I say that we would be cutting any services. So, yes, it is a very important part of the feedback that we receive, and I know that we work closely not only with individual community members but with a very wide and extensive range of community groups, including specific advocacy groups for various and particular industries and areas, as well as, of course, community councils and residents groups, who have very extensive dealings with TCCS staff members on a daily basis.

The range of activities on which TCCS staff are involved with local community members on an individual and collective basis is extensive. Of course, the community provides incredibly valuable information to the directorate and to me, as do members in this place from their discussions with the community. As members know, I get frequent correspondence from many members in this place about suggested improvements to our service levels and better ways of doing things. I think TCCS are incredibly responsive, and they will continue to be responsive to the community.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, are any services exempt from the proposed cuts to service levels?

MS FITZHARRIS: There are no proposed cuts to service levels.

Budget—election promises

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer: how will the 2017 budget handed down yesterday help deliver a better Canberra?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: I thank the opposition for their interest in the budget, and I reiterate that the government went to the last election—that we won comprehensively—with a positive plan for right across our city and Canberra suburbs. Our budget gets on with the job of delivering exactly what we said we would do when we won the popular vote in last year's election. We are making Canberra's schools better by delivering classroom upgrades right across the city, including in the growth areas of Gungahlin. We are modernising Belconnen High School. We have work underway on schools in Molonglo Valley and in east Gungahlin.

There is a significant program of investment in health as part of the 10-year health plan including: the delivery and planning of new walk-in centres in Gungahlin,

Weston Creek and the inner north; the new SPIRE centre in Woden at the Canberra Hospital; the expansion of the Centenary women's and children's hospital and more bulk billing services in Canberra's south as part of the government's 10-year health plan that was so strongly endorsed by Canberrans just seven or eight months ago.

We are overhauling the city's transportation system and bringing light rail to Canberra, something that was bitterly opposed by those opposite but strongly endorsed by the people of Canberra. We are delighted to be able to bring—

Mr Hanson: I wouldn't say "strongly".

MR BARR: We will keep on saying that. We are delighted to bring this important project for the people of Canberra to invest in a viable public transport system for Canberrans. We are investing more in our roads and public transportation.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before we go to the supplementary questions, I remind members of the opposition of not only my thoughts on interjections but also the standing orders. Can we please have the questions and answers in some level of silence.

MS CHEYNE: What does the 2017 budget show about the state of the territory's finances and the government's planned return to budget balance?

MR BARR: It shows very strong progress on the government's fiscal plan. We continue to improve the territory's bottom line and we will be back in a balanced budget and in surplus years ahead of the commonwealth. I am pleased to be able to report to the public gallery over here—

Ms Cheyne: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Ms Cheyne: Madam Speaker, could I please hear the Chief Minister's answer? I am really interested in it.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think you have the right to hear the Chief Minister in silence. There is a point of order in that the opposition continue to interject. The Chief Minister is less than 30 seconds or thereabouts into his answer and there has been a point of order. I think all but a couple were interjecting. Can we please have regard to visitors in the gallery? I do not think you are putting your best performance on show here. Chief Minister.

MR BARR: Thank you Madam Speaker. Yes, the budget position has improved in every year—in the current year, next year and across the three forward estimate years—and this demonstrates the government's commitment to not only invest in the future of this city to meet the needs of a growing population and to deliver our election commitments but also, at the same time, to continue on the path of budget repair. That task continues.

I see that the Leader of the Opposition is setting a new standard now for how the headline net operating balance should be reported. He will have to demonstrate tomorrow where he will find the \$500 million in cuts that will be necessary to achieve his new benchmark. It is a change from three decades because he has now set a new benchmark. The Leader of the Opposition has now set a new benchmark, in that he does not believe that the superannuation provision account adjustment should be included in the headline net operating balance. That is his new standard. We look forward to seeing how he will deliver that.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Mr Steel on a supplementary, members I will take a quiet moment—

Mr Coe interjecting—

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Minister, please. Members, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members of the Gunghalin Probus Club. I would also acknowledge the presence in the gallery of three staff from our twin parliament, the parliament of Kiribati. Welcome. On behalf of all members, welcome to question time.

Questions without notice Budget—election promises

MADAM SPEAKER: I call Mr Steel on a supplementary.

MR STEEL: Chief Minister, how is the ACT government delivering on its election commitments to Canberrans through the 2017 budget?

MR BARR: Our city continues to grow rapidly, and we are putting in place the service and infrastructure investments to ensure that Canberra remains the most livable city in this country and in the world. We are investing in our health system, in our education system, in transportation, in community services and in municipal and local government services, not only to ensure that our city can meet our objectives on livability and getting great health and education outcomes for a growing city, but also to ensure that we are investing in new industries with job creation so that our unemployment rate continues to be the lowest in the nation.

Our economy has been amongst the fastest growing in the country and our service exports have now risen to \$1.7 billion annually, an increase faster than that of any other state or territory over this decade. Our higher education system continues to grow rapidly. We are experiencing all-time record levels of tourism in our city, both domestic and international. Our economy is growing strongly. We will be powered 100 per cent by renewable energy by 2020.

The government remains focused on delivering the core commitments that we took to the people of Canberra in October of last year, and we were resoundingly returned against the negative and carping opposition that we see on display yet again today.

Budget—health funding

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, the budget shows that we will not see construction and completion of the surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre, or SPIRE, at the Canberra Hospital for five or six years, well into the next term of the Assembly. The city's population is expected to grow by about 30,000 people in that time. What is your plan over the next five or six years to ease the pressure on facilities that are already over capacity and causing excessive waiting times and treatment delays?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question and an opportunity to talk about the significant investments this Labor government is making in our health system. I note, of course, that we made a significant commitment to build the SPIRE centre at the Canberra Hospital. Of course, such a significant commitment requires significant and extensive planning. Our commitment was—

Mrs Dunne: It was already planned and you changed your mind.

MS FITZHARRIS: Well, the opposition may have chosen to take an outdated model to expand the Canberra Hospital as their own election commitment to last year's election. They were unsuccessful in that, as they were unsuccessful in their model of mini non-hospitals in our regions, which were resoundingly questioned—

Members interjecting—

Mrs Dunne: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, can you resume your seat? Stop the clock. Mrs Dunne on a point of order.

Mrs Dunne: The question was about how the minister is going to ease the pressure on facilities at the hospital over the next five or six years, not a riff on election commitments but looking forward over the next five or six years. The question was specifically, "What is your plan over the next five or six years to ease the pressure on facilities which are already over capacity?"

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs Dunne. The minister has a minute to go, but I do not think there is a point of order that—

Mrs Dunne: The answer should be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: She is talking about investment, as you are well aware—

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, I did not ask a question about investment. I asked a question about easing capacity. The minister is required under—

MADAM SPEAKER: If I may finish what I was about to say, Mrs Dunne, before you were very quick to your feet, the minister has spoken about investment around health services broadly. She has a minute left and she will get to her feet and she will be allowed to conclude her answer. I do not believe there is a point of order, Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: There is a point of order. On the point of order, Madam Speaker, the standing orders require the minister to be directly relevant to the question. The question was about easing capacity. It was not about investment; it was not about what they have promised to do but what they will do in the future. The minister is required to be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: As I have said, I do not believe there is a point of order. If you want to challenge that, feel free, Mrs Dunne. The minister has a minute left and she will continue.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In what world easing capacity is not done by investing, I do not know. But if the Canberra Liberals cannot understand that very simple, basic premise, and if they had listened and allowed me to finish, to talk about the investments that we have made in the health system, \$900 million over the last decade—

Mrs Jones: It is not about money in; outcomes!

MS FITZHARRIS: It is not about money; it is not about investment, but what are we going to do to fix capacity? I reject the assumption in Mrs Dunne's question that she makes about our health system. I remind members that our plan involves primary care, prevention, community-based care, acute care and specialist care. We will next year open the University of Canberra public hospital, a dedicated rehabilitation hospital that will take significant pressure off the Canberra Hospital. It will allow people to have dedicated rehabilitation services in a dedicated purpose-built facility in your own electorate, Mrs Dunne. This significant new investment in health services will be in your own electorate.

In yesterday's budget we also announced \$17 million for upgrading—(*Time expired.*)

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what forecasting has the government done to factor in population growth and its impact on waiting time trends for patients accessing SPIRE treatment over the next five or six years?

MS FITZHARRIS: One thing I can tell you is that waiting times are coming down significantly, at the Canberra Hospital emergency department in particular. That is because this government made a \$23 million investment in upgrading the emergency department, which opened in December last year, which now has a dedicated

fast-track unit, a dedicated paediatric unit, dedicated specific areas and expanded capacity for ambulances coming into the ambulance bay at Canberra Hospital. We are seeing the benefits of that investment by consistently decreased waiting times in the emergency department, which I am very pleased about.

Of course, the opposition would be the first party to criticise us if we did not plan properly for this significant investment in the SPIRE centre at the Canberra Hospital. Work is underway at the moment around the territory-wide health services planning process. This is a very important point. We know that our city is growing. We won an election last year based on our plans to invest in the services that a growing community needs. As the Chief Minister has said, and as is clear to all members, that plan was overwhelmingly endorsed by the Canberra community, in health, education, transport and community services.

What we will do over the next year is continue the very important work around territory-wide planning of our health services. That will align very closely with the opening of the University of Canberra public hospital, because that significant new rehabilitation hospital will mean we can dedicate services at a rehabilitation hospital to specifically treating people for their rehabilitation needs. That will take some pressure off Canberra Hospital and Calvary hospital, as well as our community health centres. As we roll out that planning, we are doing that work as we speak. Madam Speaker, as the opposition knows, Canberra Hospital—(*Time expired.*)

MS LEE: Minister, is this government so cash strapped that it cannot bring construction of SPIRE, a high-priority infrastructure project, forward?

MS FITZHARRIS: It just goes to show, really, the ignorance of the opposition in understanding what it will take to plan, design and build such a significant piece of infrastructure. We are getting planning underway—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS FITZHARRIS: Again, Madam Speaker, it just goes to show that they have been so far removed from the important job of actually delivering major projects. A major project of this scale—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS FITZHARRIS: The planning for the SPIRE centre, which is a significant improvement on a proposal that the Canberra Liberals took from goodness knows where: there was no planning in any of the proposals that they took to the election last year whatsoever—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS FITZHARRIS: They say they stole one from the government that was seven or eight years old. If that is the best you can do, it obviously did not work. We will do the very important work. If anyone in the opposition can deliver a major infrastructure

project like a substantial improvement to the Canberra Hospital campus through the delivery of a SPIRE centre, I would welcome their specialist engineering, planning and construction advice on how exactly they would go about doing that. The work needs to be done with stakeholders; it needs to go through all the processes that you would rightly expect us to do in terms of design, planning, procurement, integrating service delivery, discussion with stakeholders and discussion with the community. If the opposition does not wish us to go through a proper planning, procurement and design phase, that would be a surprise to all of us.

Clubs—assistance package

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, can you please detail which clubs will be beneficiaries of the clubs assistance package announced by the Treasurer in yesterday's budget?

MR RAMSAY: The clubs that will be beneficiaries of that will be the small to medium clubs.

MR PARTON: Minister, how will you guarantee that this funding assistance will be spent on genuine diversification measures and not just on padding the coffers of Labor-friendly clubs?

MR RAMSAY: Thank you—

Mr Hanson: It is an outrage—dodgy.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, that interjection was unparliamentary and you will withdraw it.

Mr Hanson: The word 'dodgy', Madam Speaker, is unparliamentary? Is that a ruling?

MADAM SPEAKER: In that context I believe it is. You will withdraw it.

Mr Hanson: While I am happy to withdraw it—

MADAM SPEAKER: You will just withdraw it without comment, Mr Hanson.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The government is firmly committed to helping clubs to diversify their income. It is part of our ongoing work to help remove the issues of problem gambling and to help clubs move away from their heavy reliance on electronic gaming machines. That is all part of the work that we have done in relation to the reduction of the number of gaming machines from 5,000 to 4,000 over this time.

In relation to the particular package, yes, there will certainly be a significant tax rebate for those small to medium clubs. We have already been working with clubs across the breadth of the sector, and I have met with a number of those individual

clubs within the past couple of weeks. I am pleased to be able to do that. What we will be doing is helping those clubs in the area of financial assistance, in easing regulatory and administrative burdens and in providing administrative assistance.

We think it is important to recognise the social contribution that clubs make. I can guarantee the Assembly and I can guarantee the opposition that that will be done right across the breadth; that there will be no discrimination based on the clubs that we have.

MR WALL: Minister, what benefits will the Woden Tradies club receive from yesterday's budget package?

MR RAMSAY: The Woden Tradies is not one of the small to medium clubs.

Mrs Dunne: Madam Speaker, a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mrs Dunne: Could I seek your guidance, please, Madam Speaker. A few moments ago you asked Mr Hanson to withdraw the word "dodgy" because you said it was unparliamentary. But Mr Hanson was referring to, I think, a dodgy deal with the clubs. He was not saying that any member of this place was dodgy; therefore I am asking for your guidance on how that is unparliamentary.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, the word was used multiple times and directed at members on this side of the chamber. In that context, undoubtedly, it was casting aspersions on members on this side of the chamber. Mr Hanson knew exactly what he was doing; and he is a serial offender.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Chief Minister.

Mrs Dunne: On the point of order, there have been rulings in the past that a reference to groups at large is not a reference to an individual member; therefore it is not unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: I have made a ruling, Mrs Dunne. I will go to something that you may choose to read when you assume this chair as deputy. In 1990 "dodgy" was withdrawn. "Dodgy" was withdrawn in 2010. "Dodgy" was withdrawn in 2013, and you asked for it to be withdrawn; and "process is dodgy" in 2015. I have made a ruling. I thought that it was targeted to calls, as the Chief Minister has said, to impugn the character of those opposite. Therefore it is withdrawn.

Schools—student wellbeing

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister Education and Early Childhood Development: what initiatives has this government established to support student wellbeing in the ACT's diverse and inclusive public schools?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Steel for the question. All public schools are there for all children in our city. As I have said before, our schools are diverse and inclusive. They embrace difference. Nobody should be excluded because of their background, culture, gender, class, religion, sexuality, ability or wealth. Everybody in our community is a little bit different. Diversity is beautiful, and the government is committed to supporting it.

We are committed to enabling children to be themselves without prejudice. We are committed to including all children as they are and ensuring that children grow up with respect for diversity amongst their peers. Alongside academic skills, schools support young people with vital social and emotional learning. All of our public schools strive to be safe, respectful and supporting environments, and there are a number of initiatives in place to help schools to achieve this goal.

In 2016 the government established the safe and supportive schools policy. This policy reflects the national safe schools framework with the goal of assisting school communities to develop sound student safety and wellbeing practices. Schools must provide an environment free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence. I am happy to advise members that in the budget presented yesterday the government has committed \$400,000 to the continuation of the safe and inclusive schools program in ACT public schools.

Alongside this important announcement, the government is focused on getting in early to ensure that student health and wellbeing are prioritised and that intervention is available to address, for example, the mental health needs of ACT children and young people. The budget commits nearly \$2.5 million for the first five of 20 additional school psychologists to support student wellbeing and mental health outcomes for students and the wider school community.

There are so many factors that influence the opportunity that a child has to learn during their time spent at school. Addressing these factors is an important part of promoting educational equity. *(Time expired.)*

MR STEEL: Minister, how is the government ensuring that ACT schools are safe, inclusive environments for students?

MS BERRY: Our students present to schools with a range of personal characteristics including diversity and gender identity and presentation, sexual orientation and intersex status. There is, in fact, no binary. The government is committed to respecting, welcoming and celebrating diversity. We will not accept prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence in our schools. A vital part of ensuring this includes ensuring that school communities have access to resources and support to provide a safe and inclusive environment.

The government's commitment to fund the ACT safe and inclusive schools program will provide schools with the support and resources that they need through the program. On an opt-in basis, schools will be able to seek out guidance for good

practice. They will have access to relevant, high quality and inclusive teaching and learning resources and they will be able to connect with other school communities to share and improve practice.

The federal government's changes to the safe schools program unacceptably weakened it. The ACT government responded by committing during the election to directly fund a new program that meets the needs of our students and school communities. Yesterday we delivered on that commitment.

Over the past few months the Education Directorate has been working with Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT to develop a new program, including a service model providing guidelines, evaluation frameworks and a communications strategy. I look forward to seeing this program being rolled out with the support of school communities and in our public schools.

I also note, for the interest of members, recent media highlighting that the Catholic system has also recognised the prevalence of sexual and gender diversity among their own young people. They are working to establish a program to support safe and inclusive schools within that system.

MS CODY: Minister, how is the government investing in initiatives to support student mental health and wellbeing?

MS BERRY: Students from many different walks of life learn alongside each other in ACT schools, and along the way any student could experience challenges that interrupt or create barriers to their education. Just as in adult life, our students face mental health challenges and need support for their general wellbeing.

I have raised in the Assembly a number of times my focus on equity in our system, particularly as the community discusses the future of education in the ACT. As the strategy forms, I hope the key part of it is how we can better enable students by addressing mental health and wellbeing.

But it is also clear that there are things we can do now. During the election, the government committed to providing 20 new school psychologists to provide students with access to professional assistance when they need it. Nationally, the percentage of students across Australia with a diagnosed mental health disorder who accessed school-based mental health support has risen over the past 15 years. In the ACT, the government is committed to providing support for these children. This is why we are funding more psychologists in our schools.

Yesterday's budget provides nearly \$2.5 million for the first five of the additional school psychologists, which will be allocated to the areas of greatest need and will respond to our growing awareness of the need for a proactive approach to mental health and student wellbeing in our schools. Over the coming year, the Education Directorate will be taking a look at how the government can better integrate school psychologists with other available mental health support for young people.

My colleagues have made some important related announcements in this budget, such as the nurse-led year 7 health checks and the expansion of the child and adolescent mental health service primary school intervention program. I am keen to see these efforts across the government working together to make a positive, lasting impact for our young people.

Budget—health funding

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, following on from recent announcements on the expansion to healthcare services that this government will provide, how does this budget improve access to health care in the community?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank the not-so-well Ms Cody for her question. As I have previously mentioned, and as the Chief Minister mentioned yesterday, this budget is focused on providing Canberrans with easy access to affordable, accessible health care in our community. As a Labor government, we know it is important to make sure Canberrans have better access to health care where and when they need it, whether it is prevention, primary care, community care or acute and specialist care. That is why we have a range of initiatives to strengthen our health services and keep Canberrans healthy and well.

We know that we cannot rely on the commonwealth government to increase bulk-billing, although we welcome their lifting of the Medicare rebate freeze. It will not come soon enough for GPs in our community. For our part, this government will improve access to affordable health care by providing \$1.05 million over three years in an incentive grant program for general practice groups to provide more bulk-billed health care. This will include bulk-billed general practice as well as allied healthcare services, particularly on Canberra's south side.

This will not only improve access to bulk-billed services but provide better coordinated care for patients, as they will be able to access a range of health services in the one place, and communication between collocated service providers will be improved.

Our election commitment of delivering more of our successful nurse-led walk-in centres is also key to improving access to health care in our community. We are providing \$14 million over the next few years to deliver a new walk-in centre for Gungahlin and to develop the design for another walk-in centre in the Weston Creek region, as well as scoping work for a new walk-in centre in the inner north.

The budget will also provide funding for ACT Health to expand the highly regarded hospital in the home program, which provides high quality access to health care for some of the territory's unwell residents, so that they can receive that care in their own home and not in a hospital setting. We really look forward to doing the planning work for significantly rolling out this service over the coming years.

MS CODY: Can the Minister for Health outline how expanding the ACT government's groundbreaking initiative of establishing walk-in centres will deliver more care in the community?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody for drawing attention to our nurse walk-in centres. This is a model unique in Australia but which has been taken up by other jurisdictions. Our budget announcement of expanding the walk-in centres will provide more Canberrans with a fast and free alternative to health care for less serious conditions. Walk-in centres help to ease the pressure on primary healthcare services by providing alternatives. Conveniently located in the community, the centres will offer fast, free one-off care for minor injuries and illnesses on a no-appointment basis. They are open 365 days of the year, from 7.30 in the morning till 10 o'clock every night, every day of the year.

Walk-in centres can help keep people out of hospitals. They will deliver additional community healthcare services to Canberrans and provide better care both when and where people need it. That is why we are rolling them out in our regions.

In mid-2014, two new walk-in centres were opened in Belconnen and Tuggeranong, collocated with the community health centres. They have met increasing demand for conveniently located health services while helping to reduce pressures in other parts of the system.

Following on from our election commitments, the budget commits to new centres in Gungahlin and Weston Creek and planning for a new centre in the inner north. Members for Yerrabi will also be excited to learn that the construction of the Gungahlin health centre will start and that the walk-in centre will open its doors in 2018. The reason we can proceed with this one first is its potential to be collocated with the existing community health centre in Gungahlin.

A comprehensive site and service options assessment will be undertaken for the walk-in centre in the Weston Creek region, providing healthcare services to the growing community of Weston Creek to Molonglo and of course the Woden Valley. We will continue to talk with the community on the location of the new Weston Creek region walk-in centre and we look forward to those conversations. *(Time expired.)*

MS ORR: Minister, how will you be supplementing the care that is available in the community through additional support for bulk-billing?

MS FITZHARRIS: As we have seen right across the country, an incredibly important issue for the community is affordability of health care and a commitment to the premise of Medicare, which underpins an affordable and accessible healthcare system for all Australians. Our work with general practitioners and allied health professionals means that we know that they often offer the first point of contact for health care.

As we know, the ACT has one of the lowest rates of bulk-billing for general practitioners in the country, with our rates historically hovering around 50 per cent. This has been slowly improving. We are close to 58 per cent in the most recent quarter but are still well below the national average of 84 per cent.

These are disappointing results for bulk-billed services in the recent commonwealth budget, noting of course again that GPs are facing enormous pressure because of that co-payment freeze that they have been under pressure on for a number of years. Although the commonwealth will lift that, it will not come soon enough.

Bulk-billing rates for our private allied health services in the ACT are also low. This results in a significant number of Canberrans not seeking health care from private allied health workers due to the cost or using outpatient allied health services in public hospitals instead. To improve bulk-billing rates, I am pleased that the ACT government is delivering on this election promise to provide \$1.05 million over three years as an incentive for general practices to provide more bulk-billed health care, including access to GPs and importantly allied healthcare providers.

In particular, this will provide greater access to bulk-billing for people in the Tuggeranong, Weston Creek and Molonglo region because we know that that is where there is a current gap. This will not only make primary health care more affordable but also facilitate better coordinated care for the wellbeing of patients. They will be able to access a wider variety of health services. Of course, this forms part of our 10-year health plan. (*Time expired.*)

Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability—estimates availability

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. Minister, will you be available to appear before the estimates committee this year to answer questions about the budget areas for which your portfolios are responsible? If not, why?

MR RATTENBURY: As Mr Wall well knows, I will not be available to attend on the days the committee has asked me to attend. I wrote to Mr Wall probably three months ago—I would have to check the date exactly—indicating that I am going to be overseas during the estimates period. I offered to the estimates committee many months ago to appear on a different day. The estimates committee has declined my offer. Therefore, I have asked that acting ministers attend in my stead.

MR WALL: Minister, will your representative at the estimates committee hearings be able to fully answer the questions as you would be able to as the minister responsible?

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Gentleman will be the acting minister during the period of my absence. I have great confidence that Mr Gentleman will answer the questions with great aplomb. As members will know, the officials will also be available. The officials have a lot of the knowledge as well, and I have instructed my officials to be as helpful as they can be to the estimates committee when they appear before it.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how do you reconcile your failure to appear during the advertised estimates process with your claimed commitment to openness and transparency?

MR RATTENBURY: I find this an extraordinarily grubby line of questioning from the opposition, given that some months ago I identified this issue and offered to the committee, to Mr Wall as the chair of the committee, a number of—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, resume your seat.

Mr Hanson: Earlier you said that “dodgy” was not okay, but the minister has used the word “grubby”. You gave a ruling directed at us, but—

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Mr Hanson. You can resume your seat. There is no point of order.

Mrs Dunne: I seek leave to move dissent from your ruling.

Leave not granted.

Standing orders—suspension

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.24): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent Mrs Dunne from moving dissent from the Speaker’s ruling.

Madam Speaker, the question of how this place is to be managed has become an important one. We have here today a hypocritical act on your part, which can only be addressed by a motion of dissent. The fact that members of the government would decline to have that matter aired shows that they do not have confidence in your capacity to deal with this place.

When there is a motion of dissent from a ruling, the matter needs to be cleared up, once and for all. I know how difficult it is to sit in that place and to be fair, and I have resisted the temptation to do this in the past. But the clear inconsistency of your rulings here today makes it impossible for us to ignore it any longer. That is why the standing orders should be suspended so that this matter is cleared up once and for all.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.26): Those of us who sat through the last parliament find that performance from the Deputy Speaker quite extraordinary. That is a very poor reflection on the Deputy Speaker. I acknowledge that she in her remarks at least raised the difficulty there is for the person who sits in that chair.

We are in the middle of question time and we are attempting to work our way through one of the most significant elements of the daily sitting pattern.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, please allow the Chief Minister to speak.

MR BARR: Through this process of question time, non-executive members get to ask questions of members. That Mr Hanson is hurting and embarrassed by the fact that his comments were called to order, that he has been a serial offender in this place and that what we are witnessing right now is the demonstration of—

Mr Steel: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 61: because of the constant interruptions from those opposite I cannot hear the Chief Minister speak. It is very clear—

MADAM SPEAKER: I ask members to remain silent while the Chief Minister is on his feet.

MR BARR: What we are witnessing is a very deliberate act and a consistent pattern of behaviour to make this place and question time unable to operate smoothly. People cannot even speak in this debate without constant interjections from serial offenders who have been on warnings nearly every day in this place and who, in any other parliament, would have been ejected because of their repeated poor behaviour.

Madam Speaker, you show a level of tolerance that I think goes above and beyond that of almost anyone else who has sat in that chair, and we resent the fact that in trying to control this place and get through question time in an orderly way—and you are conducting your duties in an appropriate manner—we need to indulge a bitter former Speaker on a personal crusade, as we have seen today.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (3.28): As much as it pains me, Madam Speaker, the Greens will be supporting the suspension of standing orders to allow Mrs Dunne to move a dissent motion. I think the motion is poor; we will not be supporting the dissent. It is within the Speaker's purview to make these judgements on the day, but we believe the process allows Mrs Dunne to move the dissension if she wishes.

Question resolved in the affirmative, with the concurrence of an absolute majority.

Dissent from ruling

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (3.29): Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Speaker's ruling be dissented from.

Madam Speaker, it pains me to have to do this but the performance today in this

chamber is one of such inconsistency that it is now important that we raise these issues. Earlier today you asked that Mr Hanson withdraw the word—I think “grubby” was the word.

Mr Hanson: It was “dodgy”.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, the word was “dodgy”—which he did. I raised the question as to whether it was necessarily appropriate to do that, because I did not think that he was referring to a member of this place; he was referring to other things but not to a member of this place. But you made a ruling and I eventually agreed to that ruling.

That would have been unremarkable except for the fact that, under pressure, Mr Rattenbury then called every one of the members of the opposition “grubby”. It was quite clear. There was no ambiguity about whom he was referring to. He actually said that members of the opposition were grubby and this was a grubby display. There was no ambiguity. I thought that, to be fair, on this occasion you should have required the withdrawal of those comments. The fact that you did not require the withdrawal of those comments shows that this ruling was a partial ruling; that you were not exercising your powers in the chair in an impartial manner, in a way that shows that you have significant regard for all members in this place and that all members in this place are treated equally.

We have had this discussion privately on a number of occasions. I know that it is a difficult thing to do to keep order in question time. I also know, recognise and appreciate that your approach to this is different from what mine was when I was the Speaker. Everyone is entitled to do this in their own way. But, when it comes to the things that were said here today and the way that you treated Mr Hanson as compared to the way that you treated Mr Rattenbury, it is quite clear for any unbiased observer to see that you have a different set of rules.

Mr Hanson may be an irritant. He was an irritant when I was the Speaker and he is clearly an irritant to you in this place. But Mr Rattenbury can equally be an irritant—he was an irritant for me when I was the Speaker—because he knows how to use the rules, because he himself has been the Speaker. Mr Rattenbury, I am sure, if you had required him to withdraw would have withdrawn, because he would have known that what he had said was overstepping the mark. But the fact that you did not ask him to withdraw shows that you have less regard for the opposition than you do for members of the government and members of the crossbench; and this is not how you conduct yourself as Speaker.

We have had discussions about things that we have disagreed about on the approach that you take. I am sure that when you were Deputy Speaker and I was Speaker you disagreed with some of the approaches I took, and we have had those discussions as well.

It is actually an interesting point to make that you picked up on Mr Hanson’s supposed unparliamentary language but when you did not pick up on Mr Rattenbury—even when it was brought to your attention—you still did not see it as sufficient to take the appropriate steps.

It is with great regret that I have to move dissent from your ruling, but if it was good enough for Mr Hanson to withdraw the word “dodgy” it is good enough that you require Mr Rattenbury to withdraw the word “grubby” when the word “grubby” was clearly directed at all the members of the opposition. I had just finished asking a question, so I could have taken exception in that it was directed more to me than to anybody else. On that basis you should have acted in an impartial way and you did not. Therefore reluctantly I have to move dissent from your ruling.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.34): Madam Speaker, I did not expect that we would find agreement on one element of Mrs Dunne’s contribution. Yes, it is true that Mr Hanson is a serial irritant to anyone who sits in that chair. It is true, Madam Speaker, that the comments that he was asked to withdraw were repeated and were very clearly directed at members on this side of the chamber, and went to suggestions of improper behaviour and conduct. That, Madam Speaker, together with your identification of at least four other occasions previously where that word was required to be withdrawn, and the clear intent that Mr Hanson had in making those statements—not once but repeating them ad nauseam—demonstrates why they should have been withdrawn. Even then, when asked to withdraw, there is always the song and dance and theatrics that come with that. That is a pattern of behaviour that those of us who have been in this place over the past nine years with Mr Hanson have witnessed.

You were perfectly entitled to do that, in spite of the position taken by those opposite who took multiple points of order against that ruling. In this instance, Madam Speaker, you are entitled to make a ruling as chair, and you have the support of the majority of Assembly members, it would appear, from the statements that have already been made. It is regrettable that question time has been delayed now by nearly half an hour, interrupted by nearly half an hour, purely on the basis of a stunt; a stunt from an individual who, in spite of feigning reluctance, has been all too eager to pursue this path. We all remember the four years we lived through the Dunne speakership and the exact issues that we lived through, and this question of having a particular view of one set of members as opposed to another. The irony is not lost on those of us were in this place over the past four years, Madam Speaker, and we will be supporting your ruling.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (3.37): We will not be supporting the dissent motion. I think that you, Madam Speaker, Mrs Dunne, I and other members who have sat in that chair have an appreciation of the difficulty, particularly in question time. Given the unruly nature of a number of members of this chamber, it is very difficult to make those judgements on the spot. I think that some degree of maturity could have been exercised here and a private conversation later may well have sufficed to resolve this matter, as has been done on occasion.

I certainly know that there were times in the last term where I felt that Mrs Dunne had got it wrong. There are decisions in my own time as Speaker that I think, on reflection, I would have made differently. From my time in this chamber, I know that the nature of being in the Speaker’s chair in particular is a challenging one, certainly in what can

only be described as the theatre of question time, as the opposition so frequently seeks to make it. It is a difficult call and I think that a more suitable pathway on this matter would have been to have a discussion later.

We all know that there is an extensive history of the withdrawal of certain words in this chamber. If one looks at the little book that sits in the first drawer of the Speaker's desk, one can see that over the past 26 or 27 years of self-government a range of words have been withdrawn and permitted at different times, often in different contexts. I am not sure that this is a reasonable way to proceed today, and we will not be supporting the motion.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.38): I will be supporting Mrs Dunne's motion because it is quite clear that your rulings are grossly inconsistent. I used the term "dodgy" in relation to a deal. You ruled that unparliamentary even though I think it is questionable: if you are talking about an inanimate thing or something not representing individuals in this place, there is a question as to whether that is unparliamentary. Regardless of that, I did so, and you used your discretion. Mrs Dunne pursued that. That position was then put forward.

Mr Rattenbury then, in speaking, described me and my colleagues as grubby. That is clearly unparliamentary. I am going to go now to about seven examples where, in this place, that has been found to be unparliamentary, including statements from you, from Mr Rattenbury and from Mr Barr.

It is just hypocritical that you would on the one hand describe what we say as unparliamentary, even though it did not refer to anybody in this place, but at the same time excuse Mr Rattenbury from his quite unparliamentary language directed at members of the opposition. I will just go to one example. This is Mr Rattenbury in *Hansard* of 2013. Mr Rattenbury said:

No, it's just that you're grubby.

He is a repeat offender. I then asked that he withdraw. Madam Speaker said:

Sit down. Mr Rattenbury, you will withdraw the word "grubby".

Mr Rattenbury said:

I withdraw the reference to Mr Hanson being grubby, as I understand it is unparliamentary, if not accurate.

So you have Mr Rattenbury, a former Speaker in this place, withdrawing, acknowledging that his statement was unparliamentary.

In another example, in 2015, I said:

It's a grubby government.

Madam Assistant Speaker then referred to a point of order from Ms Burch. Ms Burch asked that that be ruled as unparliamentary. So you then asked whether it was unparliamentary or not.

We have other examples, going to 2011, when there were points of order. Mr Barr said:

... I will withdraw the word “grubby”.

Mr Barr at that stage understood and acknowledged a ruling that “grubby” was unparliamentary. There are more examples. This one involves Mr Rattenbury with regard to “grubby”, in 2016. Madam Assistant Speaker—I am not sure which Madam Assistant Speaker it was—said:

I ask you to withdraw your word “grubby”, Mr Rattenbury, in keeping with previous rulings by the Speaker, including you on several occasions.

Mr Rattenbury has, on a number of occasions, as with all speakers, assistant speakers and deputy speakers in this place, considered referring to other members as grubby to be unparliamentary. Mr Rattenbury then withdrew.

Madam Speaker, I do not understand how it is that, when the opposition says something that arguably is or is not—we stand up in this place; I accepted your ruling and withdrew. We moved on with Mr Rattenbury despite the fact that just in the brief research I have been able to do in the last five minutes I have found numerous examples, including an Assistant Speaker saying that Mr Rattenbury had ruled on this on a number of occasions, including examples where you have called it unparliamentary and including examples where Mr Barr has withdrawn because it is unparliamentary. Because in this case it is the opposition—now you sit there as Speaker—that asks that it be withdrawn, you let it go.

It is massively inconsistent. It is hypocritical. Mrs Dunne is right to dissent from your ruling.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.43): I will be supporting your ruling in this matter, Madam Speaker. I want to put a few facts on the table. Firstly in regard to the direction of comments from Mr Hanson across the chamber, they were directed at Minister Ramsay. Madam Speaker, when you made your ruling on that word—“dodgy” was the word—and you asked Mr Hanson to withdraw, he did withdraw and then he sat down and yelled out across the chamber, “Dodgy Ramsay razor gang”.

I also want to talk about your consistency in ruling, Madam Speaker, in that you chose not to rule against Mr Rattenbury’s terminology in the same way that you chose not to rule against Mr Hanson not more than 10 minutes ago when he said seven times, “grubby”. You did not pull him up.

Mr Coe: Seven times?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, I counted them. It is my view that your ruling is consistent, and we stand by that.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.44): Madam Speaker, the Canberra Liberals obviously believe that there is a very clear inconsistency between the ruling that you gave regarding the word “dodgy” and your ruling on the word “grubby”. It is, I think, quite straightforward, especially when you consider the historical context that Mr Hanson gave with regard to the word “grubby”, and especially in the context in which it was given, that your ruling is not only inconsistent with your earlier ruling on “dodgy”, but also inconsistent with past rulings on the word “grubby”. In light of that, the opposition would be more than happy to entertain the notion of your reflecting on these decisions and coming back to the Assembly, perhaps at a later hour today, or tomorrow, with some analysis of the two rulings today, in the context of past decisions.

Question resolved in the negative.

Questions without notice

Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability—estimates availability

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how do you reconcile your failure to appear during published estimates times with your claimed commitment to openness and transparency?

MR RATTENBURY: I think this is a very unfortunate line of questioning, given that I actually went to some lengths many months ago in recognition of the fact that is not an optimal time but one where I had a set of dates on which I sought to be away; I recognised that many months ago and, shortly after the estimates committee was formed, I sought to work with the estimates committee to resolve this matter. I provided them with a number of possible solutions. They chose the one that saw the acting ministers appear on my behalf. I would prefer that this had not been the case. I offered to the estimates committee some dates on which I would appear in person immediately upon my return from being away but the estimates committee has chosen not to take that pathway.

I was not in the estimates committee meeting. I do not know why they chose that path but I reject the line of Mrs Dunne’s questioning that I have not sought to make myself available to the estimates committee.

Electricity—blackouts

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the minister for energy. On Friday 2 June the *Canberra Times* reported on the increasing number of blackouts in Gungahlin, Jacka, Bonner, Amaroo, Harrison, Mitchell and Forde. Minister, why are residents in Gungahlin having to endure regular and prolonged blackouts, and will residents be compensated?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Milligan, to clarify, I do not think there is a minister for energy; the Chief Minister is taking the question.

MR BARR: The question relates to ActewAGL, so I will take the question. The answer is, as I am advised by ActewAGL, that there are three specific issues: cable faults; system-protection tripping measures that shut down the system when a certain significant event occurs; and in one instance I am advised that a cable was cut by accident by a third party. Those are the explanations for each of the incidents.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, are any of the blackouts caused by light rail construction? Will the network have sufficient capacity to power the trams whilst maintaining reliable residential and commercial power supply?

MR BARR: I have been advised that they relate, as I said, to cable faults, a system shutdown mechanism where a certain issue occurs and the system goes into a protective mode and one incident where a third party cut a cable by accident. I do not believe that the assertion made by the member is accurate but I will seek further advice from ActewAGL.

MR COE: Treasurer, who is actually responsible for investigating the cause or causes of these power outages, and will the ACT government pay for it, either directly or indirectly?

MR BARR: ActewAGL are the network provider. They are a private entity that is owned 50 per cent by China State Grid and Singapore Power, through Jemena, and 50 per cent by the ACT government through Icon Water.

Light rail—utilities disruption

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, what notice are residents and businesses given if they are going to experience a planned interruption of either electricity or telecommunications supply due to work on the light rail?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly in respect of the construction activities along the stage 1 light rail route being managed by Canberra Metro, in close consultation with Transport Canberra and City Services, they engage in a number of different ways of talking both broadly to the community about the construction activities and very specifically about construction activities as well.

I do not believe at this point that there has been specific reference to planned outages for telecommunications or electricity. Certainly, if there is a nearby impact on the road network, local residents will both receive a letter and likely be doorknocked by the Canberra Metro team as well.

In addition, anybody can sign up to receive the weekly updates from the Canberra Metro team regarding stage 1 construction activities as well as be on an SMS list to receive more urgent updates.

MS LAWDER: Minister, has the construction of light rail ever led to unexpected interruptions to the electricity or telecommunications supply to residents of Canberra?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I know the opposition are aware, there was an outage to an NBN cable recently, regarding electricity supply. I am not aware of any at this point.

MS LEE: Minister, how many times has construction work along the light rail corridor, either directly for the tram's construction or for the associated relocation of services along the route, led to interruption of the electricity or telecommunication supply to houses and businesses in Canberra?

MS FITZHARRIS: In terms of unplanned outages, there was the one I referred to regarding NBN. I do not believe that any unplanned electricity outages were as the result of the construction of light rail.

Canberra Hospital—dermatology services

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Why are skin cancer and other patients forced to seek treatment interstate due to long waits to see a dermatologist in Canberra?

MS FITZHARRIS: They are not forced to. Many Canberrans seek treatment from local dermatologists. If Mrs Kikkert could provide more specific examples I would be happy to answer that question.

MRS KIKKERT: What is the average waiting time to see a dermatologist in Canberra, and by how much have waiting times increased over the past five years?

MS FITZHARRIS: To clarify for the opposition, access to specialist services are provided through both the public system and the private system. So if Mrs Kikkert could be a little bit clearer in her questions, I may be able to provide a clearer answer.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how long has ACT Health known that there is a shortage or predicted shortage of dermatologists in Canberra and what specific action, if any, has been taken to address the issue?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am assuming the opposition are referring to comments made by the royal college of dermatologists in a recent story. Certainly I have become aware more recently that, with the age profile of the current dermatology workforce in the public health system, a number of dermatologists will be retiring in the next few years. I have previously spoken with Dr Miller about his concerns about his own impending retirement and how he really wishes to make sure his profession is able to practise here in Canberra.

As we know, right across the country in a number of specialist services there are shortages. We have a number of specific measures that we will take in order to address some of those shortages. I will take the specifics of dermatology on notice and provide a further answer to the Assembly.

Public housing—community consultation

MRS JONES: My question is to the Chief Minister, in his capacity as Minister for Economic Development with responsibility for capital works and procurement. Chief Minister, in regard to public housing construction in Chapman, Holder, Wright, Mawson and Monash, why was industry notified of these procurement opportunities before the conclusion of community consultations?

MR BARR: I think there is a routine process for early advice to industry through what I understand to be a regular standing meeting of forward government programs and projects. It is not a commitment that a project will go ahead, but it is an opportunity to give industry advance notice of an intention, without necessarily confirming that a procurement will go ahead. So one can imagine an alternative circumstance where Mrs Jones would get up and ask a question about why industry was not consulted earlier in the process. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't, in the eyes of the opposition. In this instance the government seeks to engage and that engagement is at an early level. It does not always mean that a procurement will go ahead in exactly the manner that is first anticipated, when that engagement begins, or that it will be to exactly the same time frame. But I think there is value in early engagement with industry when it comes to government procurement.

MRS JONES: Minister, were such notifications and/or meetings held or detailed prior to the consultation process commencing with local residents?

MR BARR: I will need to take that level of detail on notice and look at the two dates but I do not think it is particularly relevant.

Mrs Jones: It is relevant.

MR BARR: I do not think it is at all, because the government's intention has been very clear: we are going to build more public housing and that involves engagement with industry. Whilst the individual blocks of land are of great interest, building public housing is something the government is committed to and will continue to do. Engagement with industry on the construction of new public housing, generally as well as specifically, I think, has value.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, why, contrary to your own platitudes, does your government continue to pay little more than lip service to community consultation?

MR BARR: I fundamentally reject the premise of the member's question. The government has been very clear over a number of years that we will be building more public housing. We have identified and will continue to identify opportunities to expand the city's public housing stock. That is not a question that is up for debate. I heard that Mr Parton may have quoted me earlier.

This is one of the issues, that apparently there is tripartisan support that we should be building more public housing in the city. There is a very lively debate about the location, the design and the density of that housing, and about construction materials,

environmental performance and how new housing fits into individual neighbourhoods. That is all a very important debate to be had. But no community can put their hand up and say, “We veto public housing in our area.” There is public housing in all areas of Canberra, and that is an important policy principle.

Unparliamentary language

MR HANSON: My question is to you, Madam Speaker. Is the use of the word “grubby” in describing members of this place unparliamentary or not?

MADAM SPEAKER: I am aware that it has been asked to be withdrawn before.

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, to be directly relevant, is it parliamentary or not?

MADAM SPEAKER: I think I have answered your question, Mr Hanson. But if it has been asked to be withdrawn at that moment by that Speaker, they have deemed it unparliamentary.

MR HANSON: Madam Speaker, why in that case, given the numerous previous rulings, did you not ask Mr Rattenbury to withdraw?

MADAM SPEAKER: Because I made the call at that time and that moment. If you go through *Hansard*, Mr Hanson, over the past 20-plus years of this place, there will have been different decisions made on different days in different discussions.

MRS DUNNE: Is “grubby” on the list that you referred to previously, and will you circulate that list as it currently stands, for the information of members, before close of business today?

MADAM SPEAKER: The answer is yes, and I do not have a problem with this being available to all members.

Budget—policing

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! Ms Orr is trying to ask the final question for the day.

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Could the minister please advise the Assembly of what additional support for front-line policing is included in the 2017-18 ACT budget?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her question and her interest in safety for all Canberrans. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the 2017-18 ACT budget will have a direct and positive impact on front-line policing for Canberra. Of particular

note, the ACT government's \$5.3 million nightlife package includes \$4.9 million over four years for six additional police officers to patrol nightlife precincts, providing a stronger and more visible presence to boost public safety.

This budget also delivers on our election commitment to equip more ACT police with conducted energy weapons, commonly known as tasers. These additional resources for ACT Policing in terms of both staff and equipment recognise the importance of ensuring that our police officers have the support they need to protect our community.

I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that the 2017-18 ACT budget includes funding for increased protective security measures for ACT Policing, funding to plan for future operating models and accommodation for ACT Policing in the ACT and it has provisioned funding for an upgrade of ACT Policing's water policing facilities.

These initiatives are a result of extensive discussions with ACT Policing on what resources our police members need to continue to provide their high quality support and service to the Canberra community.

MS ORR: Could the minister please provide further information about how the budget funding to equip more police with tasers will contribute to community safety?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question.

Providing more police with tasers further equips our police officers with the resources they need to keep the ACT community and police safe. The use of tasers has resulted in the successful de-escalation of potentially lethal incidents and gives police a less lethal use-of-force option to deal with life-threatening situations. Tasers can be deployed from a safe distance and inflict less pain for a shorter period of time than other police use-of-force options such as capsicum spray and batons.

However, primary emphasis continues to be on the use of negotiation, communication, of course, and de-escalation techniques, prior to using physical force. Governance and oversight arrangements are in place to assure the community that any use of force is appropriate and reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

The tasers used by ACT Policing will be fitted with cameras and the existing governance and specialist training will continue to ensure that there is accountability around the use of tasers. I am pleased the ACT government has delivered this commitment to increasing the safety of our front-line police.

MS CHEYNE: Can the minister provide further information about how the budget funding to provide additional police resources to combat alcohol fuelled violence will contribute to community safety?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. Alcohol-related crime is an ongoing priority for ACT Policing, as it continues to place a significant financial, social and health burden on our community. The additional officers announced as part of the ACT government's nightlife package will enhance and strengthen the platform

already established by ACT Policing's regional targeting team, or RTT, in patrolling entertainment precincts across the territory.

The role of the RTT is to ensure the responsible sale and supply of alcohol through engagement, education and enforcement. The overall aim of the team's work is to reduce alcohol-related violence.

ACT Policing members work closely with Access Canberra to educate licensees and venue staff on the requirements of the Liquor Act 2010 and Liquor Regulation 2010. The additional police resources will provide greater coverage of the broader ACT, focusing upon regional centres and entertainment precincts.

As a result of the increased resources we can expect to see increased proactive liquor licensing enforcement activities and programs, including increased collaboration with Access Canberra's liquor enforcement teams.

Police will continue to work closely with licensees to make sure that the ACT's nightlife precincts are safe for the whole community. Planning regarding the integration of the six officers is now underway.

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

Parliamentary language

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (4.05): Madam Speaker, I seek your guidance. I am not sure of the form in which I should seek your guidance. It is about an interjection that was made across the chamber.

MADAM SPEAKER: Are you taking personal offence under standing order 47 or are you—

MRS JONES: No, under standing order 55; I will give some context. Perhaps that will be helpful.

MADAM SPEAKER: It may be, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Towards the end of a question just a few moments ago, Mr Rattenbury asked across the chamber whether Steve—Mr Doszpot—is back on the angry pills. I know it is known to this place that Mr Doszpot is on some significant medication because of a very serious health matter. I wonder whether Mr Rattenbury would like the opportunity, or whether you consider that he should have the opportunity, to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: If I think it goes to a general—Mr Rattenbury?

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.07): Madam Speaker, to save a lot of drama I can simply assure all members of the chamber that I was making no reference to that.

I was responding to the fact that Mr Doszpot was angrily interjecting at me across the chamber and staring at me in a very intense way. That is how Mr Doszpot chooses to conduct himself. I made a flippant comment in response that bears no relationship to circumstances of Mr Doszpot's personal life.

If anybody took it that way, I withdraw it and I offer my apologies. But it was not intended that way whatsoever. I am very sympathetic to Mr Doszpot's personal circumstances. I hear the grunts coming from across the chamber. I actually just saw Mr Doszpot on the way down the stairs and asked after how he was going because outside of this chamber that is the—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury and Mrs Jones. Given the interruption to question time and comments and rulings I have made, I think that I would like to remind all members that we are here to serve the public. We come into this place where we have a commitment to be respectful to our community, to be respectful to each other.

Each and every day without fail there are interjections, there are points of order. Whether it is words like “dodgy”, “grubby”, “angry pills”, “hypocrite”, the list is quite extensive. I would ask you all to reflect on how you conduct yourselves. Whoever is sitting in this chair has to make rulings. Sometimes they are agreeable; sometimes they are not. But that is what this role is. The interjections, the nastiness that is witnessed from this space is depressing and disappointing and it does not become any of us.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Pettersson for this sitting due to illness.

Supplementary answer to question without notice Housing—homelessness

MS BERRY: In response to part of a question I took on notice yesterday about homelessness services, as members will know the ACT has a central intake system and therefore nobody is turned away. Every person who is eligible for homelessness services receives assistance. A number of commitments contained in yesterday's budget will make a positive impact on the government's ability to provide these services quickly.

Paper

Madam Speaker presented the following paper:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 17(5)—Auditor-General's Report No 4/2017—Performance information in ACT public schools—Corrigendum.

Public housing

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.10): I move:

That the Assembly order the production of the following documents in accordance with standing order 213A:

- (1) Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee—Agenda Item 6: Land Supply (23 April 2015).
- (2) Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee—Agenda Item 7: Land Supply (10 September 2015).
- (3) Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee—Agenda Item 4: Land Supply (12 August 2015).
- (4) Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee—Agenda Item 4: Land Supply (21 August 2015).
- (5) Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee—Agenda Item 6: Land Supply (23 September 2016).
- (6) Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee—Agenda Item 8: Land Supply (2 November 2016).
- (7) Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee—Agenda Item 5.1: Land Supply and Purchase (21 February 2017).

Following on from Mr Parton's motion earlier today and the discussion around the future of public housing in the ACT, I call on the Assembly to support this motion calling for the agenda items that have been listed before the Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee on a number of occasions through 2015, 2016 and 2017 to, once and for all and unequivocally, cast light on what the government's intentions are when it comes to the future planning of public housing in the ACT.

As the Chief Minister stated in question time, it is clearly and unequivocally the government's policy to continue identifying opportunities to build and provide more public housing across the territory. I think that in the public interest it is appropriate that the determinations, the information and the focus of the Public Housing Renewal Steering Committee be afforded the opportunity of some public scrutiny.

There is a clear process articulated in the standing orders to deal with this process. I find it hard to imagine that the agenda items that were put before a government committee are, in fact, privileged. But should they be, it will offer and afford the Chief Minister the opportunity to state that claim and have it presided over by an independent arbiter. I will leave the comments there, given that it is getting late into the afternoon.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (4.12): Yes, that is indeed the process that is outlined in standing orders. If it is the will of the Assembly to pursue that under standing order 213A, then I will, of course, seek advice in relation to the particular documents. But, given where this process is up to at this point, it will probably come as no surprise what the government's response will be to the arbiter.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.12): My understanding is that the FOI legislation has sort of a process for making decisions like this and that an arbiter would make the decision. I assume in this circumstance that it should be done according to that normal process.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Health spending

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (4.13): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) recognises the ACT Government's longstanding commitment to delivering better health services and investing in modern health infrastructure to improve the health and wellbeing of Canberrans;
- (2) acknowledges that this commitment has clearly been demonstrated in recent years through the Government's \$909 million investment in health infrastructure, which has already delivered key health facilities including:
 - (a) a major upgrade to The Canberra Hospital's Emergency Department, including new treatment spaces and ambulance bays, an expanded Paediatric Unit and more acute and sub-acute beds;
 - (b) the University of Canberra Public Hospital, delivering a significant expansion of sub-acute health care as well as major new clinical training facilities on Canberra's northside;
 - (c) the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, providing high quality specialist care for women and children in the Canberra region;
 - (d) Community Health Centres and Nurse Walk-in Centres to provide community based health care in Canberra's regions; and
 - (e) the development of the Canberra Region Cancer Centre to provide specialist care and treatment for Canberrans dealing with many forms of cancer;
- (3) notes that the 2017 Budget will further the Government's investment in the health and wellbeing of Canberrans by commencing the delivery of the ACT Government's 10-Year Health Plan including through:

- (a) expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children with new services, including a new child and adolescent mental health unit, an adolescent gynaecology service, a new paediatric high-dependency unit and paediatric intensive care beds;
 - (b) delivering and planning for three new walk-in centres in Gungahlin, the Weston Creek region and the inner north;
 - (c) investing in our nursing workforce, including through hiring more graduate nurses and nurse navigators to help Canberrans get the best frontline health care possible;
 - (d) planning for a major expansion of the successful Hospital in the Home program which especially benefits older Canberrans; and
 - (e) making it easier for Canberrans on the southside to access bulk-billing GP services through a new grants program;
- (4) acknowledges that mental health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing and that the 2017 Budget will also invest in better mental health support for Canberrans, including through:
- (a) more specialised interventions and support for pregnant women, new mothers, children, adolescents and older people;
 - (b) better suicide prevention through partnerships with the Black Dog Institute and the Wayback Program; and
 - (c) delivering rehabilitation beds in the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit;
- (5) recognises the inherent linkages between a healthy lifestyle and positive health outcomes and notes the 2017 Budget will further invest in preventative health including through:
- (a) a new Territory-wide preventative health strategy supported by an additional \$4 million in new resources aimed at helping all Canberrans live longer, healthier lives; and
 - (b) significant new investment in active transport including building the Belconnen Bikeway and enhancing community path networks in high priority areas to make walking or cycling an easier transport option; and
- (6) calls on the ACT Government to continue investing in the health and wellbeing of Canberrans through prevention, primary, community and acute health services and facilities.

The irony of my moving a motion today on health and wellbeing is not lost on me, however, I always support our wonderful health system in the ACT and use it frequently. The budget the Chief Minister moved yesterday proposes to spend a very large amount of money on the health and wellbeing of Canberrans: \$1600 million is a very large number and it is a very large part of the ACT budget. I am sure some would

say that that number is too large and others that it is too small. For me, that is not a very smart argument from either side. As soon as we start putting the dollars first we start putting the people second, and that is not what good Labor governments do. I reassure the Assembly that this is a very good Labor government.

Whilst I know that it is not always perfect, I have always had impeccable service from Canberra's healthcare system, from the birth of both my boys back in the 90s at the Canberra Hospital to the continued care and support of them during many childhood illnesses. One such memory has remained very clear in both my mind and that of my son Mark. As a child Mark and his friends were skating and scooting around and Mark had a bingle with another child. This bingle resulted in a very bad broken leg for Mark, but he got a ride in an ambulance. Whilst we know that ACT Ambulance Service response times are some of the best in the country, on this particular day that was little comfort to a screaming child and an anxious mum. The care and treatment provided by our wonderful ACT Ambulance Service paramedics was second to none. They were caring but firm when required, and the support and care continued from the nurses and doctors at the Canberra Hospital emergency department.

Mark had broken his tibia and fibula. For those who have not broken bones or just may not remember all the bones in the body, they are the two bones at the bottom of the leg—your shin bones. Mark had three lots of surgery to ensure that the bones healed properly. Mark is now 18 and he still talks about how grateful he was to the staff at the hospital—the nurses, the doctors, the Starlight Foundation staff, the school in the hospital, the physios and the volunteers—who spent countless hours helping him, me and other children in the ward. Yesterday's budget has guaranteed that the next generation of unlucky skateboarding teens will get even better care.

The surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre are at the centre of the health budget and the ACT government's 10-year health plan. The funding in this year's budget includes an initial \$6 million over two years to undertake the planning work for the centre and \$230 million in capital provision over the following years to commence design and construction.

Other features of the new SPIRE centre at the Canberra Hospital will include: a larger intensive care unit, with 48 bed bays offering both high dependency and intensive care beds; a 24-bed coronary care unit for people requiring high-level care for heart conditions; more inpatient wards with 64 beds for patients requiring overnight care; more elective and day surgical spaces for patients who can be admitted and discharged within 24 hours; enhanced state-of-the-art surgical, procedural and imaging facilities; and new operating theatres increasing capacity from 13 to 20, giving ample capacity and allowing for the concurrent management of emergency and elective procedures.

As has been the ongoing topic of conversation over the past two days, I am not very well at the moment. Minister Fitzharris noted yesterday in question time that maybe I need to access some of the health services on offer, so that brings me to my next point: the introduction of additional bulk-billing services, particularly in my electorate of Murrumbidgee, that help many people receive the health care they need when they

need it regardless of money. I have been seeing my doctor for almost 20 years now and he has always bulk-billed me. My doctor bulk-bills me and all the other patients regardless of income, their marital or child status and regardless of age.

In my discussions with him yesterday in Kambah while I was getting my antibiotics, he told me he had seen an interview on the ABC which stated that currently in the south of Canberra there are no bulk-billing doctors. Although he knows there are some, he agrees that all doctors should offer that service to their patients. I am pleased to advise that the 2017-18 ACT budget will provide \$1.05 million over three years to GP practice groups to extend their commitment to bulk-billed allied health services. The minister has reassured me that further information on the grants will be available to GP practices soon. This initiative is part of the ACT government's 10-year health plan which is future proofing our health system.

That 10-year health plan does not stop just at supporting GPs to bulk-bill; it will also fund the creation of new nurse-led walk-in centres in the Weston Creek region and Gungahlin. These new centres meet the government's commitment to provide a better way for people in those areas to get fast, free health care close to home and when they need it. It is important to note that walk-in centre health care will continue to be provided on a walk-in, no-appointment basis and free of charge. These commitments are not based on a whim. Comprehensive planning, consultation, site investigation and analysis have been undertaken to ensure that the new centres will meet, and continue to meet, the needs of the ACT community.

Staying healthy and active is something that I enjoy doing, but it is something that helps to keep my asthma at bay. In 2015 I was so sick with asthma that I could not walk from my front door to my letterbox without having an attack. That is a distance of less than five metres. I have had asthma all my life, but in 2015 it ruled my life. I had to give up all activity that I had loved and undertaken. I struggled with the normal acts of life. I was unable to get a full night's sleep as I would wake up choking, a common complaint in chronic asthmatics. I was lucky: my wonderful bulk-billing doctor, whom I have already mentioned, referred me to an incredible respiratory specialist at the Canberra Hospital, whom I continue to see. I know there are many people in our community today who suffer from severe and chronic asthma and have done so for much longer than I. To those people I say: you are an incredible inspiration. I know the stress of not being able to get air into your lungs, and I know the stress of never knowing when you might stop breathing.

When I first went along to see my doctor at the Canberra Hospital I told him that I had signed up to do my first triathlon in November of that year. Let me just explain the time frame. I saw the doctor in July 2015, when I could not even walk to the letterbox without gasping for air, and was competing in my very first triathlon in November 2015. Like me, this particular doctor likes a challenge but this one was a little bigger than even he thought was possible to achieve. However, thanks to his expertise, advice and passion in caring for his patients and giving them the best that research has to offer I achieved my goal. Not only did I compete but I got second in my age group.

Not only have I had a great doctor supporting me, but I have also been lucky enough to live in a city with a government that provides facilities and urban planning to be fit and healthy. This government has made a \$4.7 million commitment to design and construct a bikeway in Belconnen, linking the University of Canberra, Radford College, the Canberra Institute of Technology Bruce campus and the GIO Stadium with the Belconnen town centre. This bikeway will connect with existing community paths and the new cyclepath established as part of the Aikman Drive duplication, while providing a separated cycle route along Benjamin Way.

This government is investing \$250,000 in the 2017-18 budget to undertake a feasibility study, consultation and preliminary designs for the Belconnen bikeway project. The project will also investigate the potential utilisation of the disused bus-only section of Joynton Smith Drive in order to provide increased penetration and linkage to the west of the Belconnen town centre to suburbs like Page and Florey.

Staying fit and healthy is not something this government leaves to the public service, though. As many of you may be aware, Mr Pettersson and I raced against each other in the half marathon as part of the Australian Running Festival. This was my first run over this distance. Mr Pettersson, on the other hand, had been a keen runner all through university and had even competed in marathon distance races. Whilst he is off sick today, Mr Pettersson is normally a rather fit and healthy looking young man. Both of us undertook to run some 21 plus kilometres to raise much-needed funds for charity but also because it is really important in our roles as representatives of our community to be as fit and active as we can be to ensure it positively impacts on our health. As it turns out, working to stay fit and active is a great way to stay healthy, but it is also a great way to run a half marathon. Just in case members of the chamber were unaware, I not only completed my very first half marathon in a respectable time of two hours and 24 minutes, but I also beat Mr Pettersson by nearly 20 minutes. But obviously being fit and active is my main objective in this statement.

With my remaining few minutes, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated and hardworking doctors, nurses and other health professionals working in our hospitals and community health facilities to provide quality health care that our community can rely upon. We will continue to work with the clinical workforce, private service providers and non-government service providers and organisations to deliver the best healthcare system for our community.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (4.28): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the health portfolio this afternoon. It is a very strong priority of the Canberra Liberals, and this was clearly the case during the last election. While I welcome the opportunity to speak on the health portfolio, I think that Ms Cody's motion, which is somewhat to be expected on the day after a budget, is nothing more than a self-congratulatory pat on the back for the Labor Party. As with all of these things with the Labor Party, the Labor Party likes to obtain virtue from spending other people's money. Ms Cody bore that out today.

I sympathise with Ms Cody. She drew the short straw. They said, “You have to speak on something today in private members’ business, and it has to be health.” She is sick. It is ironic that someone with such a terrible throat would be speaking in the chamber on the importance of health. I am a great advocate for the public health notion of soldiering on being a really bad idea, and it is bad for public health. I can only recommend, now you have delivered your speech, Ms Cody, that you go home, take some appropriate medication and give your throat a rest.

Most of what Ms Cody spoke about was her personal reflections on the strength of the health system over time. I think that there is merit in that. As a long-term consumer of health services in the ACT, I can also reflect on some of those issues. But I will not do that today because I think that the meta-argument is more important. It is not how the health service delivers for me, but how the health service delivers for the people of Canberra. The question is not necessarily how much money we spend but how effectively we spend that money.

I am not going to quibble about the \$1.8 billion in the budget for health, but it is not the best performance measure. I tend to bang on about this quite a bit, but it is not the best performance measure that you can have. I would like us to see work on this over time. I am glad that the Auditor-General is doing work in this space in relation to performance measures, because input costs are not a performance measure.

But with all the backslapping that we see in this motion, and I am actually also anticipating the amendments that have been circulated by the minister, what we see is in fact a very poor commitment to health. What we see is that in the Canberra Hospital, which is sort of the biggest consumer of the health dollar in the ACT, we have a neglected building.

There has been work done over the past little while. I, along with members of the health committee, had an opportunity to visit the refurbished accident and emergency services department quite recently. There is no doubt that the services are a vast improvement on what were there. I was particularly pleased to see the high level of facilities available especially in the mental health area and in the paediatric area. This is a much-improved space over the space that was there before and, before that, the non-existent paediatric space that I experienced when some of my children were younger.

But we have a 45-year-old building that is attempting to function when it is over-capacity; it has the worst emergency waiting times in the country; and it has the worst elective surgery waiting times in the country. We also have, anecdotally, poor performance in emergency surgery where people at the lower level of acuteness are regularly rescheduled in a way that is not good for their health outcomes. In fact, I believe, and this is not too much of a push, that when the Canberra Liberals promised in the 2016 election to demolish and rebuild buildings numbers 2 and 3, the government was eventually dragged kicking and screaming to an admission that perhaps they needed to do some work after all.

Mr Hanson will recall that when he made his announcements in relation to our commitments to rebuilding buildings 2 and 3, the then health minister said that it was unnecessary, that it was ridiculous and that we did not have to do that for at least 10 years. But it was quite clear after a while that they were mugged by reality—the reality of the polls—and the government came on board with a promise in relation to the hospital.

What we have seen is the SPIRE project. It is quite clear that the SPIRE project was a commitment to funding a hospital rebuilding in the ACT that was not the Liberal Party's promise. They could not possibly do anything that the Liberal Party had done; so they had to come up with a different model, which is why in the budget at the moment we are seeing a large amount of money being re-spent on planning for the diagnostic and treatment services that had already been planned for the demolished and re-built buildings 2 and 3.

This is the problem that we have today. We have a system where we know that we are going to have to wait five or six years before that system comes into operation. In the meantime there will be increasing pressure on the hospital system. Even when that is finished, we will have a dead heart in the middle of the hospital buildings where buildings 2 and 3 will not have been refurbished. Therefore, the whole hospital campus will be compromised through that.

In addition, we have a whole lot of issues in the health department which have not been addressed, which cannot be addressed by mere money. We have continuing problems with staff morale and bullying. We have issues of failing to report on data, which has again resulted in another root and branch review of data systems in the hospital.

In today's *Canberra Times*, for example, the AMA's branch president, Dr Steve Robson, is reported as saying:

...there was a "downside" to the budget, with a growing shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists in the ACT and what he dubbed "a crisis in the adult acute mental health service".

The report also pointed to a lack of strategic planning, again typical of a Labor government. I note Dr Robson's views that:

... there was a need for greater workforce planning in the mental health space and more stability for psychiatrists to keep and hold their Canberra jobs.

Darlene Cox of the ACT Health Care Consumers' Association said on radio this morning that the government needs to come up with a new workforce strategy. There is no better example of the Labor government's strategy-free spending. But do not take Dr Robson's or Ms Cox's word for it. Listen to the words of constituents, people who are today attempting, or who in recent times have attempted, to use the health services. Their outcomes are not great.

My constituent wrote to me, and I quote:

I have a son who ... is now over 18 so requires regular visits to a psychiatrist to write prescriptions and monitor his progress. Since he turned 16 I have had to travel to consult two specialists in Sydney as the paediatricians at the Canberra Hospital will not treat patients after they turn 16.

But the lack of services is not limited to paediatric psychiatry services. What about this constituent's circular dilemma in relation to his son who, and I quote again:

... is trying to get off his drug habit ... he cannot go to rehab because he cannot get into detox which is a pre requirement ... they would put him on a maintenance program which rehab will not recognise.

Another constituent has written to me about his experience in Calvary hospital after a debilitating stroke, which resulted in his left side being paralysed. I will not read the rather graphic words, Madam Assistant Speaker, but allow me to paraphrase them. Among his concerns were the state of the equipment, the limited English of some of the staff he had to deal with, a lack of timely nursing attention and not even help to return him to bed when he had fallen out.

Here is another one I quote:

Ms Fitzharris is wrong when she says that there is no evidence of patients being sent home early when they are NOT yet well enough nor safe to travel. I myself had 3 occasions in the last 12 months when I was sent home from hospital far too early.

Without going into too much detail on this case, it involved infections arising after surgery which, ultimately, in the words of the patient, "exploded", resulting in her needing five months of community nursing to treat the infection to the point of healing.

Another constituent approached me about her daughter's condition and treatment, which required specialist services. Despite many attempts, including through referrals and even an application to ACT Health for a care package, my constituent's daughter was unable to get appointments, including almost six months of no response from one specialist area.

There are many other cases like this that I receive on an almost daily basis. These matters I always refer to the minister for some feedback and some assistance, but the stream of those does not diminish. These are the people that I am concerned about. It does not matter whether we spend \$1.1 billion, \$1.2 billion or \$1.8 billion if the people who are paying for those services are not getting the services that they need.

There is a regular train of people to my offices and other members' offices to complain about the lack of reliable services or the inappropriateness of services that

they have received. Of course, the lack of reliable data is not helping any of this. It is not enough simply to spend more money without a comprehensive, well-informed strategic plan.

This government does this consistently; the tram is a prime example. It came up with the tram so that it could get into bed with the Greens so that it could stay in government. Money spent on a project without a strategic plan or even a business case does not stack up. Spending money in the health system without the foundation of a comprehensive strategic plan will result in little more than a hospital with no patients. It might make the government feel better but it will not make the patients feel better.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (4.41): I thank Ms Cody. I join with Mrs Dunne in suggesting that she please go home now and look after herself, but I really thank her for bringing this motion into the Assembly today. As the Minister for Health—soon to be, officially on 1 July, minister for health and wellbeing—I am pleased to speak in the Assembly today in support of Ms Cody’s motion.

I note that, unfortunately, Mrs Dunne might have to leave the chamber, but in particular I note with disappointment two recurring themes from the Canberra Liberals: one is to continue to talk down our health system; the other is to continue with the failed argument of blaming everything on light rail. It is quite extraordinary to again see that Mrs Dunne cannot help herself, once again referencing light rail in a debate on our health system.

I want to take this opportunity—I know it is the wont of the opposition to talk down the health system and to talk only of the negative—to reference a number of pieces of correspondence I have received in the past few days. It is certainly the case that people write to me with issues they have confronted in the health system, as they write to all ministers in all governments in every country in the world. I also receive a number of emails and correspondence complimenting our health system and the staff who work extremely hard, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year in the health system. Many of them note to me that they make these comments because they know that the coverage that the health system gets is often a negative one.

Very recently, on the weekend, I was approached in the Canberra Centre food court by a lovely gentleman from one of our northern suburbs who saw me and came up to me to say that he just wanted to pass on how grateful he was. After 50 years of being very healthy, recently he had found himself needing some of the most significant types of treatment we might find in Canberra Hospital. He said to me, and he followed up with an email, that over the past 2½ years his health had deteriorated very much, that he found that cruel and was tested through and through by the services of our health services in the ACT. He said:

Before of this situation I had unclear idea how the system work and functioned so well. I was astonished to discovery how human resources works so sound in the health organization, so organize y caring for our health and wellbeing. As well I was so impressed with the equipment’s and the technology.”

Just last Friday, I had another email, which said:

I wanted to pass on my thanks for the wonderful customer service I received from—

a particular employee—

in the Medical Records Department at Canberra Hospital. I was trying to track down some 15 year old imaging records ... While always conscious of her obligations regarding patient confidentiality—

this person—

found the records and at my request sought additional advice to enable the records to be released to my GP.

She was sympathetic, cheerful, friendly, and got a successful outcome—basically everything you want from a customer facing employee, or any employee, really!

In addition, just yesterday I had some wonderful feedback from a couple who needed to visit our emergency department recently, recognising that they rarely needed to visit the ED but that the quality of the facility, the professionalism of the staff and the timely manner in which they cared for and treated this particular person was impressive. They said:

We hear all too often how our public utilities and systems are broken or in need of repair. Our experience last Friday reassured us as to the quality of care on offer at least in the ED at Woden Valley Hospital.

Madam Assistant Speaker, that was literally just from the last five days.

In addition to that, I am pleased to speak specifically to the motion that Ms Cody has brought forward in the Assembly today. As she has said, the health and wellbeing of Canberrans will always be a significant priority for the ACT government and for all Labor governments. We have an incredibly strong track record of delivering quality health care to our community. As the motion acknowledges, and as I spoke about in question time, the government has made a \$909 million investment in recent years as well as the additional investment we are making in this budget.

Mrs Dunne is correct in stating that the SPIRE centre will not be operating until the early 2020s, but I note that that is exactly the same time frame, I believe, in which the Canberra Liberals' addition to the Canberra Hospital would have been operating. And the SPIRE centre goes above and beyond in terms of providing dedicated emergency and elective operating theatres. That is important, because it will allow elective surgeries to proceed without a potential interruption from an emergency surgery.

We made commitments to expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and

Children that we are delivering on in this budget as well. Now that it has been in operation for five years, we have an opportunity to expand the centre, very importantly.

I note the AMA's comments in the *Canberra Times* today. I welcome their support of our budget, and I know that Minister Rattenbury will welcome continuing to talk to the AMA about the significant investment the government is making in mental health services, including the recent opening of the Dhulwa secure mental health unit and our commitment, which we announced funding for in yesterday's budget, to providing an inpatient mental health unit for adolescents in Canberra. This is one important facility that the community has spoken with us about; we are really pleased to be able to fund the delivery of this important new service.

We are getting on with delivering the commitments that we took to the community in 2016, commitments in prevention, commitments in primary health care, commitments in community-based care, and commitments in acute and specialist services.

In essence, we will provide better care when and where Canberrans need it, and we will ensure that funds are allocated to the areas of greatest demand as our city grows. I welcome in particular, Madam Deputy Speaker, your acknowledgement that the city is growing, your acknowledgement that demand on health services will continue. I agree with you that, in part, a measure of outcome is not simply the inputs into the system.

In the real world, we must also acknowledge the role of the commonwealth government in funding health services. For my part, as the health minister working with my fellow health ministers across the country, I think we can collectively do better. The commonwealth has in its power a significant funding agreement, particularly regarding funding of our hospital system. I will be working with other health ministers and with the commonwealth health minister to make sure that we address the gaps and to make sure that we can get funding where we most desperately need it, in the primary prevention space, so that we can fund the services and the programs that prevent people from being unwell and, if they are unwell, get them back on their feet as quickly as possible and have a really serious crack at addressing the significant burden of chronic disease that our community faces.

That is why we will continue to invest in prevention, primary health care, community-based health care, and acute and specialist care. The focus of any health system should be on keeping citizens well, on keeping citizens healthy. It should not be on sickness or, necessarily, hospitals and building. It should be about the quality of services that we are providing to our community, aligning those services with their needs. That is exactly the important work that has been underway for some time and that is reaching a very critical point.

In question time, I made reference to the very important work under the territory-wide health services plan. That planning work has been underway within the directorate for some time as part of the broader reform work and also as part of the important work that we need to do to plan for the delivery of services at the University of Canberra

public hospital. Those services will provide dedicated rehabilitation services to Canberrans in a state-of-the-art rehabilitation hospital.

That means that we are refreshing and updating our territory-wide health services plan. It will align with our commitments to expand the Centenary hospital, to build the SPIRE facility, to open UCPH, to open new nurse walk-in centres, and to expand the very important hospital in the home program.

I would reiterate that it is important that this planning take place. It is important that in yesterday's budget we made significant investment in ensuring that this planning can get underway and can continue to address both the opening of UCPH and the significant health commitments that we made in yesterday's budget.

We are extremely proud of the health commitments that we have made. We are extremely proud of this Labor government's record on health. We are extremely proud of all our staff within ACT Health. And with those community organisations and private organisations that also deliver health to the community, we will do everything we can to continue to invest in health for Canberrans.

I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

MS FITZHARRIS: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (3), substitute:

“(3) notes that the 2017 Budget will further the Government's investment in the health and wellbeing of Canberrans by commencing the delivery of the ACT Government's 10-Year Health Plan including through:

- (a) establishing the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency (SPIRE) Centre at The Canberra Hospital to enhance the delivery of hospital-based health care through boosting the number of operating theatres, expanding the Emergency Department, providing a larger intensive care unit which will also include dedicated paediatric care, a coronary care unit, more inpatient wards, more elective and day surgical spaces and state of the art surgical, procedural and imaging facilities;
- (b) expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children with new services, including a new child and adolescent mental health unit, an adolescent gynaecology service, a new paediatric high-dependency unit, and paediatric intensive care beds;
- (c) refurbishing and upgrading the Acute Aged Care and Oncology wards at The Canberra Hospital to enhance patient safety and security and improve the quality of inpatient services;
- (d) delivering and planning for three new walk-in centres in Gungahlin, the Weston Creek region and the inner north;

- (e) investing in our nursing workforce, including through hiring more graduate nurses and nurse navigators to help Canberrans get the best frontline health care possible;
- (f) planning for a major expansion of the successful Hospital in the Home program which especially benefits older Canberrans; and
- (g) making it easier for Canberrans on the southside to access bulk-billing GP services through a new grants program;”.

(2) Omit paragraph (4), substitute:

“(4) acknowledges that mental health is a vital part of overall health and wellbeing and that the 2017 Budget will also invest in better mental health support for Canberrans, including through:

- (a) more specialised interventions and increased support for pregnant women, new mothers, children, and young people;
- (b) better suicide prevention through partnerships with leading providers;
- (c) expanding the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit to deliver new rehabilitation beds in the secure mental health unit; and
- (d) establishing the Office for Mental Health to improve coordination across the service system.”.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (4.51): I rise today to speak in support of Ms Cody’s motion and Minister Fitzharris’s amendments to the motion.

Health was a strong priority for ACT Labor at the election last year. Our Labor government is investing in a world-class healthcare system in this budget and delivering on our election commitments. At the election, we introduced our 10-year health plan for renewing Canberra’s health services, including investments in modern health infrastructure. This budget delivers \$443 million in new investments to kick off our government’s 10-year health plan. The plan provides the investments we need in health infrastructure for acute and subacute patients, local healthcare services for our growing city, and investments in preventative health and mental health. Our growing population in Canberra and ageing population on the south side will mean more demand on our healthcare system, and this budget will provide them with the health care they need when they need it.

One of the ACT government’s key local responses is through our successful nurse-led walk-in centre model. Nurse-led walk-in centres are run by trained nurses to provide cost-free immediate care for minor illness and injuries without needing an appointment. The ACT government’s existing nurse-led walk-in centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong have provided an invaluable service for the health of all Canberrans in need of minor and immediate attention from medical professionals.

The demand for these services has grown. As we heard in annual reports hearings, presentations have risen from when they first opened, from 15,237 presentations in 2010-11 to 33,713 presentations in 2015-16. I am pleased to see that in this year's budget we are delivering on our commitment to expand the network of walk-in centres by committing a significant investment of \$14 million to build more of these centres across Canberra.

The investment in the budget includes the design of the Weston Creek region walk-in centre. I am pleased to see that this service will become available to south-side residents in Weston Creek, Molonglo and Woden, in my electorate, in the future. Establishing a centre in the Weston Creek region will provide all people on the south side with improved access to free, fast and convenient health care. Our investment will also help to reduce pressure on our primary healthcare services to ensure that our emergency department, which is one of the busiest in Australia, can deal with more serious presentations and referrals.

We know that it can be difficult to find a bulk-billing GP in Canberra, particularly on the south side. We know from statistics that on average in the ACT 68.1 per cent of people were bulk-billed in and out of hospital, which is much lower than the national figures. Our government has taken on board these statistics, we have listened to the community, and we are taking action in this budget. We are delivering on our commitment to encourage better access to bulk-billing GPs in Canberra's south.

And the budget has invested more to provide access to GPs and allied healthcare services to meet the demand of our growing city. One million dollars will be made available to bulk-billing GPs and bulk-billing clinics to expand their practice or to hire more health professionals. This will extend to allied health professionals as well. The rationale behind this grants scheme is to allow these services to build upon and expand their practices and healthcare options for Canberrans.

Through this investment, ACT Labor and our government will be working with established healthcare sector partners in the ACT. We have seen the success of the health cooperative models across our city, and this investment will improve access to this type of bulk-billing practice. These grants will seek to ease the burden of seeing a doctor for Canberrans so that everyone can enjoy access to affordable, quality health care.

Health care has always been a priority for ACT Labor, and we have always invested in quality healthcare infrastructure, particularly at our hospitals. Through the budget, the ACT government will also deliver on our commitment to provide better health care for women, youth and children in our community. As part of this, we are investing almost \$70 million to expand the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. This expansion will also help us to meet the growing needs of the community and demand for maternity services as our city continues to develop. The funding, over four years, will provide for the detailed planning and design of the expansion, as well as construction to deliver a range of new services to the Centenary hospital, for completion due in 2020-21.

The hospital will expand both physically and in terms of its service delivery capabilities, with additional maternity beds, additional paediatric high dependency unit beds, a new paediatric intensive care treatment space and an adolescent gynaecology service. This funding to expand the Centenary hospital will also provide more birthing beds and staff to care for women during pregnancy, during birth and into the postnatal period. This will ensure that Canberrans receive a high-level state-of-the-art maternity service in a centre of excellence in women's and children's health for our region.

We are also investing a brand-new hospital building. At the election, Labor committed to strengthening our hospital care by constructing the new surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre, the SPIRE centre, at the Canberra Hospital. SPIRE will transform the Canberra Hospital campus and enhance the delivery of hospital-based health care in a modern, purpose-built facility. It will boost the number of operating theatres from 13 to 20, providing ample increased capacity and allowing for concurrent management of emergency and elective surgeries, avoiding delays and rescheduling.

With the new expanded emergency department at Canberra Hospital, the current ED will be dedicated to providing specialist emergency health care for women and children. The two EDs will operate as one, with separate entrances to provide the best experience for Canberrans using these services. This budget starts the important planning work and design work on the SPIRE centre. We will provide \$236 million, allocated over the next four years, which is happening at the same time as we are investing in light rail. We can do both at once.

The budget also delivers \$17.3 million for significant upgrades to acute aged care and cancer facilities at the Canberra Hospital to provide better patient care and comfort. This important work will continue to build our hospital to meet the needs of Canberrans and our whole region.

Awareness around youth mental health issues has reached a new high in the community, and it is important that this forward-thinking government demonstrates a commitment to specialist help. One of the key issues raised with me at the election was youth mental health. I was proud that Labor committed at the election to expanding the hospital to provide a dedicated adolescent mental health unit. We will deliver on this commitment through the expansion of the Centenary hospital, which will provide a specialist acute mental healthcare space, with planning starting in 2017-18. This initiative demonstrates the government's commitment to expanding inpatient mental healthcare services for vulnerable young people in our region, specifically benefiting health outcomes for these individuals.

Three million dollars will be invested in the budget to expand the child and adolescent mental health service consultation liaison service within the Canberra Hospital; it will now operate seven days per week. New funding will fund the CAMHS primary school intervention program, enhancing case management and coordination of support

services for primary school aged children from five to 12 years. The adult Dhulwa mental health unit will be expanded, through an investment of \$13.8 million, to deliver new rehabilitation beds in the secure mental health unit.

We know that a healthy community ensures economic prosperity, productivity and overall greater quality of life. This is why it is essential that we invest in acute care and secondary care services, but we must continue to invest in preventative health measures. A key part of our 10-year health plan was developing a preventative health strategy. I was delighted to be involved in the initial discussions at the Preventative Health Forum in April. In the 2017 budget, there is an investment of \$4 million over four years to deliver key initiatives and innovation in preventative health which will address risk factors associated with poor health outcomes, in particular the burden of chronic disease.

This budget delivers in our health system across so many areas, whether it is better dental care in the community, with \$3.2 million for two additional mobile dental vans to provide treatment closer to home for those who need it, or the government's initiative to employ more graduate nurses and nurse navigators to help patients better understand and access services available through the health system and increase the nursing and midwifery scholarship fund.

The ACT government's 10-year health plan, funded through this budget, will renew our city's health services. It is an investment in the wellbeing and health of our community, and comes on top of the work we have already done in expanding the emergency department at Canberra Hospital and the work we are doing in building a new teaching hospital at the University of Canberra. This budget has demonstrated our government's commitment to health care. I thank Ms Cody for bringing forward this motion and commend it to the Assembly.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.02): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to talk about the ACT government's commitment to providing better support for a healthier community. Our health is everything. I am sure all of us here know the simple but intense pleasure of finally feeling better after an extended period of illness—and I hope that Ms Cody feels this pleasure soon—and the renewed appreciation of just being able to go about your day unhindered. When we get struck down by injury or illness we often rely on medical professionals to help us mend, whether we have a niggling infection, a broken bone or we need to go in for surgery. We put our hope and trust in the healthcare system. That is why the Labor government is committed to delivering better care when and where our community needs it.

The government has made a significant investment in health over recent years, laying the groundwork for the comprehensive health initiatives announced in yesterday's budget. The 2017 budget delivers on our election commitments to provide even better support for a healthier community. The budget invests \$1.6 billion right across the health sector, from better health infrastructure in our hospitals to better health care in our suburbs and preventative health measures. We will see new services and programs while existing projects will also come to fruition. Existing hospitals will be expanded and improved. The new University of Canberra public hospital will come online and

more community-based walk-in centres will be rolled out across the city. This is the start of the Labor government's 10-year plan to keep Canberrans healthy and active.

Our hospital precinct will expand to include new, world-class facilities to provide better services for Canberrans and to prepare for our growing population. We will invest \$236 million over the next four years to plan, design and start building the SPIRE centre in Garran. SPIRE will represent a new era in surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency care in the ACT. Our city's kids and young adults must also have access to the best health care which meets their needs. That is why the Labor government is investing \$70 million in expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. The hospital will receive a new child and adolescent mental health unit, an adolescent gynaecology service, a new paediatric unit and paediatric intensive care beds as well as 40 more maternity beds to care for expectant mothers.

The 2017 budget continues the government's investment in the University of Canberra public hospital in my electorate—and your electorate, Madam Deputy Speaker—of Ginninderra. The government will provide over \$16 million to this important health infrastructure project to fund the operational commissioning of the building. The government will begin training clinical and non-clinical support staff in implementing planned models of care, clinical policies and procedures, getting the facility ready for patients in mid-2018.

UCPH is a critical part of the record investment the government has made in our health system over the past few years. The new hospital will help strengthen the ACT's health system by providing dedicated rehabilitation services for both physical and mental health. It will also help alleviate the pressure on our current health system and free up more resources at other hospitals in the territory. Our hospitals will improve and expand to provide world-class health care to our growing population. We can rest easy, knowing that if we or our loved ones must go to hospital we will have access to the best care and facilities. For most of us, though, visits to the hospital are thankfully few and far between. However, we probably get struck down by a lurgy or suffer minor injuries throughout the year. I know I am not alone in being one of those people in the last few weeks.

That is why the ACT government is also investing in community-based health facilities to support Canberrans to remain healthy and active. Fourteen million dollars will be spent over five years on two new nurse-led walk-in centres in Gungahlin and the Weston Creek region and on planning and scoping work for a community health centre in the inner north. These centres provide accessible health care for minor injuries or illness, taking the pressure off our GPs and hospital systems.

Belconnen already has a nurse-led walk-in centre, which I visited when I came down sick with strep throat last week. I can personally attest to how accessible, professional and helpful the nurses at the centre are. In half an hour I was seen, examined, diagnosed and provided with medication, all without an appointment. The further rollout of these centres across the city will make a significant difference to health care in the community.

The ACT government is also making sure that more vulnerable groups in our community are properly cared for. The budget invests heavily in health care for women and children, and there will be a major expansion of the hospital in the home program. This program especially benefits older Canberrans who may not be able to make the trip to their local hospital.

The territory will benefit from two new mobile dental clinics to service vulnerable communities and schools and the employment of more graduate nurses for front-line health care. A \$23.8 million mental health package has also been announced and it will provide extra support to pregnant women, new mothers, children, adolescents and older people in particular.

Of course, prevention is the best cure. We know that an active and healthy lifestyle can fortify our immune systems, improve our wellbeing and protect us from injury and ailments later in life. In yesterday's budget a host of preventative health measures were announced. I am particularly excited about new investment in active travel corridors in my electorate. The budget commits money to the Belconnen bikeway, which will connect the Belconnen town centre with UC, Radford College, CIT Bruce and the GIO stadium as well as our neighbouring suburbs. This bikeway will make our town centre a more cycle friendly, active and healthy place to live and work.

The government has also announced that the age friendly suburbs program will be expanded to more suburbs, including Page in my electorate. This program will see \$1.5 million invested in walkway infrastructure such as footpaths, crossings and traffic islands, with that investment being shared with Hughes. These improvements will help everyone to get around and in particular will assist the elderly in getting out and staying active.

The ACT government has proven its commitment to the health and wellbeing of our community. The budget announcement yesterday shows that the government is serious about its 10-year health plan and the government will continue to provide the highest quality health care for our diverse and growing community. I thank Ms Cody for bringing forward this motion today.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (5.09): I rise to give my support to the amended motion and to reaffirm the ACT Greens' commitment to an effective, accessible and affordable healthcare system for all Canberrans. The Greens share the view of the World Health Organisation that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. We know that preventative health care is the most effective way to improve health outcomes, as well as reducing healthcare costs over time.

That is why the Greens believe that an effective health system must be based on strong primary and preventative healthcare services, as well as investing in health promotion, disease prevention and early intervention initiatives. We are committed to reducing barriers to access to care wherever possible and want to see people interact with health services before they become unwell.

The Greens took a preventative health plan to the election which would improve the health of our community and take pressure off the acute health system. We acknowledge that our hospitals need to be supported to meet the needs of our growing city and we recognise the investment the government is continuing to make in acute health services and facilities in this year's budget.

But this investment cannot be at the expense of a longer term commitment to prevention and primary health care. We cannot simply do one or the other. It needs to be both and we need to make sure that we adequately resource each of those streams. And that is why I am pleased to also see the delivery of a number of items from the parliamentary agreement in the 2017-18 budget.

In particular, I note the investment in nurse-led walk-in centres in Gungahlin, Weston Creek and the inner north, which will provide high quality care with reduced waiting times for people with minor illnesses and injuries. These sorts of initiatives are the way we need to think about health care in the 21st century, responding to increasing rates of chronic conditions and their associated complex management needs.

It is simply not an efficient or effective use of resources for those cases that could be managed safely and effectively in the community to be directed to our emergency departments and into our hospitals. Initiatives like the walk-in centres utilise the skills and capabilities of our professional nurses in order to make the best use of health resources and get the best outcomes for health consumers. It is much better for somebody to be able to whip into a nurse-led walk-in centre, receive a free visit and have a shorter waiting time and also free up the emergency department for those who genuinely need that urgent treatment that an emergency department is designed for.

The Greens are also supportive of the expansion of the hospital in the home program which will support people to transition out of hospital more quickly and will allow them to recover or manage their condition in the comfort and familiarity of their home environment. The management of patients in their homes has been shown to reduce the likelihood of contracting infections, particularly dangerous resistant infections which can be found in hospital environments. Returning home can also improve and quicken recovery for some people due to the obvious psychological and emotional benefits it provides. This is an important initiative that will help keep people out of hospital or avoid re-entry into the hospital system following treatment. These are initiatives that recognise that the health profile of our population is changing and our health system needs to adapt to meet the evolving needs of the Canberra community.

Today, one in five Australians is living with multiple chronic conditions and the fee-for-service model, on which many of our primary and acute services are based, falls short in providing appropriate care for those people. Chronic illnesses are complex, and effective management needs long-term treatment and monitoring of symptoms by a range of health professionals working together in a coordinated way.

While a fully coordinated primary care system will need to be developed through national reforms, the Greens are pleased to see the government's increased investment

in community care in the ACT in recognition of this changing environment. As I mentioned earlier, the Greens believe that the job of our health system is to keep people healthy, not just treat them when they are already sick. I think Ms Cody made some very good points about this in her earlier remarks about health and wellbeing, fitness and the associated benefits.

Certainly at the election we called for the introduction of a preventative health strategy and we are pleased that this item is being progressed in the budget process. The healthy weight initiative has been a good first step to help our community improve nutrition, increase exercise, reduce co-morbidity factors, such as smoking, and engage in active lifestyles. I look forward to seeing how the new plan expands on this investment to focus on the prevention of preventable conditions such as obesity, cardiac disease and type 2 diabetes.

Of course preventative health extends far beyond the health system and should include initiatives across transport, city services, education and other portfolios to make it easier for Canberrans to have active, healthy lifestyles. Beyond the direct investment in health services, we also need to invest in better walking and cycling paths, upgrading local sporting facilities and making it easier for families and children to participate in local sporting activities. We need to plan for the maintenance and development of recreational facilities as part of the long-term vision for our city. We also need to ensure that health education is a focus in our schools, ensuring that our children and young adults have an understanding of how to manage and improve their physical, emotional and psychological health.

This brings me to the importance of mental health as part of a holistic understanding of health and wellbeing. With one-third of our population needing mental health care at some stage in their lives, we must ensure that the mental health system can provide services that match demand. That is why we are making a significant investment to improve mental health services in the ACT through this year's budget.

As the first Minister for Mental Health in a dedicated portfolio in the ACT, I believe in a Canberra where wellbeing is prioritised, where quality mental health services are easily available and where everyone who needs it has access to the treatment and support when they need it. My focus has been on increasing mental health support for children and youth, in line with the parliamentary agreement, and a renewed emphasis on suicide prevention: both areas that I am pleased to have delivered funding for in this year's budget. I will speak more on each of these items as we further outline our response to the budget in coming days.

I noted the comments from the head of the AMA in today's *Canberra Times* and his concerns about some of the mental health services in the territory, and Mrs Dunne made those comments earlier in the debate today. I can assure members that I will follow up those issues with the AMA. They raised them with me for the first time yesterday at the community event at lunchtime. I am organising a meeting as soon as I practically can to follow up those issues with them, because they are important questions that they have raised, and I am keen to get to the bottom of their concerns. I look forward to having that conversation in detail with them.

Let me simply conclude by thanking Ms Cody for bringing this motion forward today. I am pleased to see that the focus of our thinking on health is broadening beyond the acute sector. We all know the importance of the acute sector for those moments of emergency and crisis, and we cannot thank it enough that it is there. But investing in primary and preventative care is also vitally important for the long-term health and wellbeing of our community. The Greens believe in health as a fundamental human right, and we are pleased to see these investments which will help make healthcare services more accessible for Canberrans no matter where they live or what their circumstances.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (5.17): Thank you to everyone for their kind words today. This was a very important motion for me. It has taken all my energy to be here today to bring it on and to be able to read it into the record. It is something that I am extremely interested in. Health is something that affects all of us, and the health, and wellbeing, of our community is one of the most important facts for me.

I used the speech to speak about some of my experiences in the healthcare system, because I have had very positive, caring and wonderful experiences in the healthcare system, like comments in many letters that Minister Fitzharris has received. I would also like to thank Minister Rattenbury for talking about the preventative side of health care. Prevention is a very important side of health care. As I spoke about earlier, we cannot begin to be the healthy and active community we are without some of those preventative programs.

I note that park and pedal that I launched earlier this year is one such initiative that is allowing Canberrans to cycle part of the way to and from work. I think it is a fabulous initiative, and something that we probably should all look at trying, some of the different, active travel options that the government is working on.

I would also like to reinforce the \$1.6 billion investment that we are making in health in this year's ACT budget. It is about a ten-year health plan, and that is something that cannot be lost in today's society. We are talking about a long-term vision for our health system to support our community.

It is also important, as Mr Rattenbury has noted, to deliver health where we need it and when we need it. The walk-in centres are a perfect and prime example of that fact. I do not want to take up too much more time because I know that we will have a very late afternoon already, and there are many more motions to bring forward today. However, I want to also add that the mental health initiatives and the \$23.8 million to support the mental health of our community is something that is also very dear to my heart, and I am looking forward to seeing that delivered across the board.

Finally I would like to say, as someone who is petrified of dentists, the additional two vans that we are bringing on later this year to help support those less fortunate and the children in some of the lower socio-economic areas of our society are really important assets to people. Our teeth are very important. I am not sure exactly how many people realise how much damage and ill health is done often because our teeth are not up to scratch.

Again, I thank everyone for their input to my motion today and thank Madam Deputy Speaker and the minister for their concern about my health. I can assure members that I will be making my exit very shortly.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Recidivism rates

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.21): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the recidivism rate in the ACT continues to rise;
- (b) the Australian Bureau of Statistics report on Prisoners in Australia 2016 found that 74 per cent of ACT prisoners had previously been imprisoned under sentence, the largest proportion of any State or Territory;
- (c) a recent Canberra Times article (14 April 2017) reported that the Throughcare Program is failing to lower recidivism rates for Aboriginal inmates;
- (b) the ACT Policing 2015-16 annual report states crimes against the person have increased by 22.2 per cent;
- (e) assaults in the Canberra City Centre have almost doubled from 281 in 2014 to 430 in 2016; and
- (f) on 16 March 2017, the Evaluation of the ACT Extended Throughcare Pilot Program was released. Minister Rattenbury says in his ministerial statement the Program has contributed to a reduction of both recidivism among participants in the Program and of crime rates; and

(2) calls on the Minister to advise by 21 September 2017:

- (a) what impact the Extended Throughcare Program has had on reducing the rate of recidivism and crime;
- (b) what the Government is doing to address the 74 per cent recidivism rate and by when is the Government aiming to achieve this;
- (c) what, if anything, is being done to assist the 26 per cent of those who did not participate in the Program and who had far worse recidivism rates;
- (d) what programs are underway in the Alexander Maconochie Centre to address the rate of re-imprisonment; and

- (e) outside of the Extended Throughcare Program, what government/non-government organisations have been engaged to facilitate inmates re-entering the community, what funding is provided to these organisations and what services is the funding for.

As shadow minister for corrections, I am pleased to stand here today and speak to the motion in my name seeking some clarity around figures that have been promoted around our recidivism rates. Australia has high recidivism rates and, while data experts wrestle with how to measure recidivism, there is general acceptance that a good starting point is to measure the number of those who have been previously imprisoned, or imprisoned again.

In 2007 the Australian Institute of Criminology reported that around 60 per cent of those in custody in Australia have been in prison before. Twenty years on, recidivism rates are still high. The Australian Bureau of Statistics *Prisoners in Australia, 2016* report found that 56 per cent of Australian prisoners had previously been imprisoned. Of greater concern to me, here in this place, was that the ACT had the highest rate, with 74 per cent.

From studies that have been undertaken, there is consensus that reoffending behaviour or recidivism can be influenced by factors including poor education and employment histories, mental illness, and poor physical health, as per our previous debate, as well as drug and alcohol misuse. Age and being Indigenous, unfortunately, are also risk factors in Australia.

Previous offenders need intensive support to prevent recidivism, including environments that enable them to safely address areas where they may be vulnerable to reoffending. Internationally, such programs that work are tailored to the individual, and rolled out in safe environments.

International literature supports the idea that an essential role of the prison is to provide an environment that reduces the risk of reoffending. Many offenders have education and skill levels well below the Australian average, and are more likely to be unemployed, which has an impact on their health and ability to find housing. The introduction of vocational education and training programs as part of prisoner rehabilitation offers opportunities for offenders to reduce this disadvantage, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful reintegration to the community, and reducing risk of reoffending, as per the advice of the Australian Institute of Criminology.

They also had a study into reducing recidivism through vocational education and training, and examined the impact of education on reoffending behaviour. It looked at the results of a Queensland vocational education and training program that showed an offender's chance of returning to prison after two years was 32 per cent for non-participants in the program compared with 23 per cent for those who had participated. So work skills and education are key.

One of the highest risk factors for recidivism, however, is imprisonment. While imprisonment aims to prevent crime and enhance community safety by removing

offenders from the public arena, as well as acting as a deterrent to potential offenders and a means for meeting society's expectations for reparation, imprisonment may also foster further criminal behaviour.

The minister is mindful, no doubt, of these issues, and has sought to make inroads into the area via the ACT justice reform strategy and the extended through-care program. The ACT justice reform strategy, which commenced in mid-2014, examined, amongst other things, the influence of changes to sentencing practice on reducing crime and recidivism. The minister, in releasing this report on 6 February 2017, stated that the strategy's key achievements included the new community-based sentencing framework involving intensive correction orders, and a significant expansion of the territory's restorative justice system. This work forms part of the government's justice reform program, and that aims to provide the right services and support for offenders with high and complex needs and their families, as per the government's media release on 6 February 2017 regarding sentencing reform to target recidivism.

However, to date, from the data I have been able to interrogate, the program seems not to have actually reduced overall recidivism in the ACT. In March this year the minister released a review into the extended through-care program. Through care is voluntary, and provides support to detainees returning to the community at the end of their custodial sentence at the AMC. There are similar through-care programs running throughout Australia, according to the University of New South Wales review of January 2017.

The extended through-care pilot, also a voluntary program, was not mandated as part of any supervision order, and perhaps understandably. Initially, the program was limited to supporting prisoners prior to their release. The model has been extended to support clients into the community after their release, and was first funded in the 2012-13 financial year. While this post-release care model is not unique to the ACT, our extended through-care model is unique in offering support for 12 months, and in offering this service to former detainees without ongoing supervision orders, again per the University of New South Wales research. In short, the program supports an offender's transition into the broader community.

The evaluation of the extended through-care pilot program was released in March this year. The evaluation was conducted by researchers at the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. The researchers found that the program had achieved high uptakes and had a positive impact on clients beyond their time in custody. The review also claimed a reduction in recidivism of 22.6 per cent of participants. However, what does that number mean? Is it that 77.4 per cent of participants have reoffended or is it a reduction from the current 74 per cent from the 2016 ABS data to 51.4 per cent of reoffending? The recidivism rate seems still to stand at around 74 per cent, according to the ABS, from data from only last year.

In his ministerial statement on the extended through-care program pilot, the minister made the following statement:

The report concluded that the program has been effective in terms of outcomes for clients. Return to custody episodes for clients reduced by 23 per cent compared to the three years before the program was introduced ...

We are seeing reduced crime almost across the board in Canberra, and we are making serious headway on reducing reoffending. There is a clear link here.

That was in Minister Rattenbury's ministerial statement in March 2017 on the extended through-care program. I am happy for the minister to make improvements in his corrections portfolio, and, in providing a constructive approach, I will highlight issues that arise as we go on with the debate.

There is no doubt that there is a clear link between recidivism and crime data. Where reoffending is reduced, the crime rate is known also to reduce. However, we are not seeing significant reductions in the recidivism rate in the ACT, and we are seeing a concerning increase in certain crime rates.

With respect to the crime rate, the ACT Policing annual report showed that crimes against the person increased by 22.2 per cent in the last year, and reported assaults have increased by 40 per cent since 2014. Assaults in the Canberra city centre have almost doubled, from 281 in 2014 to 430 in 2016. Moreover, at the time of the minister's statement, the ACT Policing crime statistics map of the ACT for January to March 2017 showed an increase in crimes since 2015, up by almost 500 crimes. Crimes on the increase included assault, burglaries, theft, property damage and vehicle theft. They were the highest they have been in the past five years.

In addition to the minister's statement on crime, which paints perhaps an inaccurately rosy picture, the rate of recidivism is also up from 2013, where the imprisonment rate of recidivists was 73 per cent. As stated earlier, the ABS reports that, in 2016, 74 per cent of ACT prisoners had previously spent time detained, the highest proportion of any state or territory.

The minister has an ambitious target in his parliamentary agreement of a 25 per cent reduction in recidivism by 2025. That is good, but we need to be up-front and transparent about what reductions have actually been achieved by providing tangible benchmarks to work with, unaffected by too much spin.

The extended through-care program is a good program. Any program that aims to reduce reoffending, improve community integration post release and improve social health outcomes of offenders being released from the AMC, I believe, is both supported and expected by the Canberra community. But I do have some questions for the minister, and I will briefly go back to some numbers that he may not have heard because he was having a conversation with officials here.

The question that I put earlier was about the 22.6 per cent reduction that you have stated. What does that actually mean? Does it mean that 77.4 per cent of participants have reoffended or does it mean that there has been a reduction from the 74 per cent recidivism rate amongst those people down to 51.4 per cent? That is at the heart of what I am trying to get at, for the minister's benefit.

I would like clarity on the 23 per cent, or the 22.6 per cent, being used to claim early results. Is it reflective of an overall rate or is it simply relating to those who have chosen to go on the through-care program? According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the percentage of prisoners previously imprisoned since 2013 is as follows: 2013, 73 per cent; 2014, 76 per cent; 2015, 75 per cent; and 2016, 74 per cent. Those are the ABS stats in *Prisoners in Australia* for those following years. These figures do not appear to indicate serious headway yet in reducing reoffending. The recidivism numbers are too high. I would like to know how we will actually get a change in this disproportionately high rate of recidivism in the ACT.

Since taking up the corrections portfolio I have raised a number of concerns about the operation of the AMC, our prison, and whether the facility is achieving what the government set out to achieve. I have highlighted concerns with the availability of new industries to all inmates. Giving prisoners the opportunity to engage in job training and develop new skills will hopefully help them to not just find work but to keep work once they are back in the community.

Like the minister, I have high expectations of our facility. I am seeking to ensure that offenders are given every opportunity to pay their dues, begin the process of rehabilitation and re-enter the community prepared for the difficult circumstances that they will be confronted with. I recognise, as I think the minister does, the difficulties faced by former detainees. I can only imagine how difficult it must be post release to re-enter the community, find employment, build new networks and perhaps avoid old networks in a small city like Canberra.

I acknowledge efforts being made regarding issues such as reoffending. Due to the lack of clarity now on this 22.6 per cent reduction figure, which has been stated, and given that it seems our facility still has an extremely high population of re-offenders, I would like clarity on the following matters: what impact the extended through-care program has had on reducing the rate of recidivism and crime when the ABS data suggests otherwise; what the government is doing to address the 74 per cent recidivism rate and by when the government is aiming to achieve it; what, if anything, is being done to assist the 26 per cent of those who did not participate in the program and who, I assume, had far worse recidivism rates; what programs are underway in the AMC to address the rate of re-imprisonment; outside the extended through-care program, what government or non-government organisations have been engaged to facilitate former inmates re-entering the community; what funding is provided to these organisations and for what services they are being funded.

I note that the minister has circulated an amendment which seeks to omit (1)(a).

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I have had to revise it; sorry.

MRS JONES: That is okay. I have a revised version here compared to what I was shown by the minister earlier.

Mr Rattenbury: I am happy to give you leave to speak again if you want to have a look at it.

MRS JONES: Sure. I am happy to speak again to that later in the debate.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health) (5.34): I welcome the opportunity to talk in the Assembly today and have a conversation with colleagues about issues of recidivism in our corrections system. It provides me with an opportunity to both answer some of the questions Mrs Jones has posed today—and I largely agree with Mrs Jones’s motion—and bring a range of information back at a later point in time. I have circulated amendments, and I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I move:

- (1) Omit paragraph (1)(a).
- (2) Omit paragraphs (1)(c) to (e).
- (3) Omit paragraph (2)(c).

I will come to my proposed amendments in a moment, but I will start with talking about recidivism overall, particularly in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. I look forward to coming back in September with even more information based on what has been asked for today. Of course I, like everybody in this place, am concerned about the high recidivism rate identified in the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 *Prisoners in Australia* report. For the awareness of members, there are a number of measure by which recidivism is measured, and I will explain those now.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics measures all people who have returned to custody who have previously offended. Then there is the report on government services issued in late January each year which measures people who have offended in the previous two years. So there are two different measures out there: the ABS one is whoever has offended in their lifetime and the report on government services is whoever has reoffended within a two-year period.

The report on government services 2017, which covers the 2015-16 financial year, shows that the overall rate of ex-detainees returning to custody fell for two years in a row—from 46.6 per cent in 2013 to 41.9 per cent in 2014 and then 38.7 per cent in 2015—and then rose again in 2016 to 41 per cent. In the past couple of years we have seen a downward trend and then unfortunately a bounce back up in 2016. That figure is still below the 2013 and 2014 figures but, nonetheless, is above those of 2015. This is largely due to a 5.7 per cent increase in recidivism among non-Indigenous men, and unfortunately this goes to the heart of the motion before us.

In 2015-16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 22.8 per cent of the total AMC detainee population. I acknowledge that this is deeply concerning. We

continue to see over-representation of Indigenous people in our justice system. I am personally committed to improving this situation; I know the rest of the government is and I know this entire Assembly is committed to addressing this. I will speak briefly about some of the many initiatives we are progressing to reduce recidivism. As I have said, I will provide a much more comprehensive statement later in the year.

As members would be aware, in yesterday's budget I announced that funding would continue for the justice reinvestment trial currently being developed and implemented in partnership with Winnunga. This is an important example of a co-designed program working collaboratively with local providers and of the government taking the time to ensure that we make a genuine impact on addressing often complex structural disadvantage.

As Mrs Jones's motion points out, the recent evaluation of the very successful extended through-care program identified some areas for improvement in relation to engagement with male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders leaving custody. While I do not shy away from the need to enhance through care's outcomes for this group and have announced increased funding for the program to do just this, I assure members that that work is already underway.

The most recent advice I have to hand shows that out of the 73 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients who accepted through-care support for the 2015-16 period, only six returned to custody within the same financial year. Yes, that is six too many, but as a proportion, it is relatively lower than the overall recidivism statistics and offers a point of optimism. It is not an ultimate solution and I am not saying we should rest on our laurels, but it is a note of optimism.

Most of these through-care clients returned to custody for a less serious offence than their previous offence or for breaches of parole or court orders. A number of clients lived in the community for a longer period than previously managed. Again, that is not something to completely celebrate but it is acknowledgement that through care is assisting people to live their lives longer in the community before they reoffend.

For people who have had a long and repeated history of offending, simply being out of custody for six months rather than one month is an advance that we can try to build on in the future for improving their lives and increasing the length of time that they are out of custody. These small measures do not show up in some of the formal statistics but they are also part of the positive progress I believe is being made for some former detainees.

Another example of an effort to deal with this area of recidivism is a bail support trial which is in the first stages of development as part of a broader justice reinvestment strategy. It is a vital element of the government's commitment to addressing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the criminal justice system and of reducing recidivism by 25 per cent. It is intended that the bail support trial will provide services and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who, in the absence of bail support, would likely not be granted bail.

The government remains committed to justice reinvestment. This work will be further demonstrated by the commitment to reduce recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025. This is a bold commitment. I think some people are unsure whether it can be achieved, but I think it is a strong item that I brought forward into the parliamentary agreement. It is important that we set ourselves ambitious targets, set those reach goals, and that we strive hard to get them. I will be doing everything I can in my time in these portfolios to set ourselves up to achieve that. I will rest on the knowledge that we have set ourselves that ambitious target and we will strive to at least meet it if not exceed it.

Developing what it is going to take to meet those targets is a complex piece of work; there is no single solution. No single piece of work is going to change it and no single provider will change that. It will require the combined effort of a range of government agencies, a range of community stakeholders and participation with those who have been involved in custody. But I will provide the Assembly with a progress update and response to this motion in September.

As I have said, I have circulated some amendments which seek to omit a number of paragraphs and I will briefly speak as to why. It is not that I disagree with providing this information to the Assembly, but Mrs Jones states at (1)(a) that the recidivism rate in the ACT continues to rise. As I have cited in the statistics, it has been a bit up and down so I do not see that as an accurate characterisation. I do not want to take great issue with it but I to seek to omit it because of those statistics.

The reference in (1)(c) to a recent *Canberra Times* article is a reference to someone's interpretation in an article. The through-care report is publicly available. I am happy to table it again in September but it is freely available to members. It is better that we access the actual report rather than a *Canberra Times* interpretation of it.

Paragraphs (1)(d) and (e) refer to police statistics. I have no issue with them, but they are not related to recidivism. Those offences may have been committed by somebody who has offended before or they may have been committed by somebody who has never been involved with the criminal justice system. Again, I do not want to take great issue with them, but when we are focusing on recidivism they paint a picture that is not entirely what we are discussing. I do not see that as a contentious act but simply one of focusing us on the matters we are talking about.

As to paragraph (2)(c), I simply cannot source the reference to 26 per cent of those who did not participate in the program. I think that might be a misunderstanding. Our participation rate in through care has been extremely high. Our numbers of detainees accessing the program have been in the order of 98 per cent of all people released from custody. I am happy to talk to Mrs Jones and clarify that, and if there is anything in an offline conversation that warrants further clarification we will add that to the September statement, but I think that is a misreading of the figures.

Hopefully those remarks explain the intent of my amendments. I am very happy to support the rest of the motion today and bring this information to the Assembly to endeavour to answer the questions that have been posed and to provide an in-depth level of information to colleagues in the Assembly.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (5.45): The government will be supporting this motion, as amended by Minister Rattenbury. As Attorney-General I am committed to building a Canberra that is safe and strong and connected. Our approach to criminal justice needs to be comprehensive. Every part of the justice system has a role to play in establishing Canberra as a restorative city.

The motion is focusing on statistics. Today in my speech I would like to focus on people because engagement with people in the system helps tell us how to prevent reoffending more effectively. Understanding the experience of individuals is how we design a justice system that supports rehabilitation. Of course, recidivism statistics are important. They help us measure how well our justice system works for people. It is clear from the statistics that we need to do more. Recidivism means more victims of crime. It means our engagement with offenders did not fully succeed in helping reintegrate them into the community. But the causes of recidivism are complex and they are varied.

There can be no doubt that the factors which cause offending come into play well before a person is charged with a crime. So any conversation about the performance of the Alexander Maconochie Centre needs to include the perspective of what happens before people get there. In my portfolio as Attorney-General that means focusing on the role of the courts.

One of the statistics that we know from working with the courts is that drug and alcohol abuse is strongly correlated with offending and recidivism. In 2012 the Australian Institute of Criminology reported that around half of all recorded offences were attributed to the use of alcohol or drugs by offenders. Getting the right systems in place before a person enters the AMC is absolutely critical to achieving a restorative outcome for these people.

Judges, magistrates, health professionals and correctional staff need to work together. The evidence is strong that if we provide the right support services to people with drug and alcohol problems at the right point in their contact with the judicial system, we can address these dependencies and, in turn, build more resilient people, more resilient families and a more resilient community.

That is why I am working to establish a drug and alcohol court for the ACT. A drug and alcohol court is a way of creating relationships and engagement that set people up to succeed in their rehabilitation programs. Remembering that the statistics we are talking about today start in every case with a person and that person's relationship to the community is vital. The new drug and alcohol court will reduce recidivism by addressing drug and alcohol addiction as a root cause of offending.

The territory is well positioned to achieve strong results based on a range of advantages that we have. One is that in this jurisdiction we are fortunate to have a Chief Justice who was instrumental in establishing the New South Wales Drug Court.

Another is that as a city state with a central courts precinct, bringing all of the necessary services together in one location is easier to achieve. Finally, Canberra is a progressive city with a government that is absolutely committed to restorative outcomes across the justice system.

A working group has been established within the Supreme Court already to look at how a drug and alcohol court can succeed in Canberra. That working group includes judges, legal professionals, corrections experts and health experts. It is working through the challenges inherent in creating a new treatment-focused court. The government provided \$400,000 in the 2017-18 budget to better support the design and the scoping work that is already underway.

The drug and alcohol court is a key part of this government's efforts to make Canberra a restorative city with a rehabilitative justice system. As Attorney-General, I have a responsibility to ensure that our courts are working in concert with the rest of the community to rehabilitate offenders and therefore to reduce recidivism.

Minister Rattenbury's amendments will mean that the motion is more focused on rehabilitation services and through care. In supporting this motion as amended, I would like to emphasise that the government's work as a whole will be people focused. The statistics that are cited in this motion are indeed useful measures. The most successful programs to address recidivism statistics will come from an even better understanding of people. In creating a drug and alcohol court in the correctional system and across the diverse range of services that we deliver, this government is and will remain people-focused and progressive. I commend the motion as amended.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.50): I rise today to share a few words in support of Mrs Jones's motion. The first part of the motion includes some sobering statistics, but I do not wish to talk much about statistics. Numbers are important, of course, because it is the numbers that tell us that something is not right in the territory and therefore needs to be fixed. By one measure, the ACT has the highest rate of recidivism in Australia. The program designed to help lower recidivism rates for Aboriginal inmates appears to be failing to make a difference. At the same time, personal crime rates in parts of the territory are worsening.

But there is a very important reality behind these numbers, one that we must never lose sight of. When we discuss these statistics, what we are really discussing is people. It is one thing to talk about 74 per cent of ACT prisoners having been previously imprisoned; it is a completely different thing to think about the individual men and women behind the statistic. These are not just ACT prisoners. They are someone's sons and daughters. In most cases, they will have mums and dads who love them, who worry about how they are going, who wish and hope and pray that someone, somewhere, would do something to help their children turn their lives around. In many cases, they will be somebody's brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties, cousins, mates and friends.

They may also themselves be someone's mum or dad. Think about that for a moment. Think about the little girls and little boys who desperately hope that dad or mum

comes home from jail, and this time stays home: for the birthday parties and the walks in the park, to cheer them on at the soccer or the footy, for bedtime stories and cuddles and all the rest.

What is the inherent worth of just one of these prisoners, Madam Speaker? I say that it is great. Each one of them is important to parents, to family, to friends and colleagues. Each one of them should be important to us. If they are important to this Assembly, then we have a right to know what the government is doing to address the rising recidivism rate in the ACT, what they plan to do, and what programs and services are currently being provided and funded.

Then appropriate improvements need to be made. It is simply not good enough to keep locking up the same people over and over and over again. Often this problem is framed from the perspective of the impact that repeated criminal behaviour has on the community. I acknowledge the seriousness of this impact, but let us also remember what unchecked recidivism does to the men and women who are cycling through our courts and correctional facilities and what it does to those who love them most. The impacts on our community reach far further than just the harm caused by the crimes committed.

Joseph Malins penned a poem in the 19th century that is still frequently cited. In it the people debate the merits of either building a fence along the edge of a steep cliff or stationing an ambulance down in the valley. When it comes to this issue, and to so many others, I vote for the fence. Let us find out what kinds of fences we already have first, and then let us fix any holes and, if necessary, build more fences: bigger, better and stronger.

People have agency, which means that nothing the government does will ever be foolproof. But I for one am not satisfied with having the highest recidivism rate of any jurisdiction in Australia. I would think that the Minister for Corrections would not be satisfied either. I hope not one person in this chamber is satisfied.

An ounce of prevention, it has often been said, is worth a pound of cure and this is obviously true when it comes to preventative medicine. But it is just as true in other areas. It is far better to help a family resolve its issues than to take the children into the care and protection system. It is far better to support conflict resolution than to let disagreements escalate until they clog up our courts. And it is far better to invest in the rehabilitation of the men and women who find themselves in jail than to just keep letting them back in. For the sake not just of our community, but of the men and women whose very lives we are discussing today, I ask the members of this Assembly to support this motion.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (5.55): I will speak to the amendments and close the debate. I thank Mrs Kikkert, Mr Ramsay and Mr Rattenbury for their words in this debate. It is an important matter to discuss. I am glad that we were able to do it in a constructive way. I am glad to understand a bit better the 22.6 per cent improvement figure. I look forward to more information about that in September if that is possible.

Also, I understand why the government would use a rate like that. Yes, it shows up faster improvements but I guess ultimately what we need to see is for that to flow on into the rate of reimprisoned people who are in the AMC. Ideally, in the long-term—over a period of years—by the time we get our next census, that 74 per cent in the ABS stats will not be 74 per cent. I hope for that and I hope that the minister hopes for that too.

I agree with Minister Ramsay in his statements about building resilience and using whatever restorative processes are workable, reasonable and safe for people. On the matter of restorative justice, while he is listening I think it is good to add that I have my concerns about the use of that in certain sexual violence matters. I hope that he will be paying a lot of attention to that as it is rolled out in the ACT.

On the matter of building resilience, I was recently in the last week touring a prison facility in New South Wales, a women's prison. I was really taken by the care and concern of the woman in charge of that facility for the women in that prison. I know we have a new person who has just started in the role in our prison to manage the whole business. I hope that the same level of care and concern for the outcomes of detainees is able to be displayed and effective. I think the women in that facility seemed to know that the governess who is in charge really gives a damn about them. I think that would make a difference.

She spoke about dealing with a small cohort of people in a much more concentrated way. Actually, I think we probably need to consider, if it has not been considered already, the possibility that some detainees may wish to live outside the ACT after they have served their time. If it is their desire to restart a new life, with new connections, that should perhaps be respected as well. I would love to hear more about whether our through-care program actually offers that at all at this point.

I accept that the minister is amending the motion. I do not take any great umbrage with it. I think the main thing is that we are going to get more information about the through-care program and that we can keep the eye of the public and the Assembly on what we are doing in this area. I think, frankly, most people would say that this is an area where we are failing. I agree with ambitious targets. Let us keep talking about it and see what we can do to improve it.

I will close on that note and thank all who have been involved in the debate. I know it is a late night; so we will move on to the next matter once we have had our vote. I thank all for their involvement.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the motion for the adjournment of the Assembly was put and negatived.

Demonstration housing precincts

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (6.00): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT has historically led Australia in development quality—for example, in the late 1990s, Kingston Foreshore and Gungahlin Town Centre were leading showcases of street-based mixed-use development;
- (b) nationally and internationally, best practice has moved forward since the 1990s—for example, leading precincts in Europe are delivering profitable, high-quality, environmentally-sustainable housing, including substantial affordable housing;
- (c) in “Canberra: A Statement of Ambition”, the Chief Minister states that “we need more than a ‘business as usual’ approach to achieve our potential and deliver the successful, equitable and sustainable city Canberrans seek”;
- (d) the Minister for Planning and Land Management’s Statement of Planning Intent and the New Experimental Architecture Typologies (NEAT) competition moved towards delivering a demonstration housing precinct, however, no housing has eventuated to date;
- (e) demonstration precincts are important as they test innovative design, construction and planning processes, prove the financial viability of new approaches, increase industry skill levels, drive demand for innovative products and showcase local industry capabilities;
- (f) Canberra’s design and construction sectors include world-class skills and could provide highly-competitive export firms for the ACT;
- (g) Canberra’s research and academic community includes world-class skills in areas such as design and renewable energy;
- (h) housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable in the ACT;
- (i) many older Canberrans remain in the family home due to the lack of appropriate options for “ageing-in-place” within their neighbourhoods; and
- (j) the environmental impact of housing comes from construction, occupation, renovation and eventual demolition and it is important to consider the impact of all phases; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to deliver one or more world-leading demonstration housing precinct/s that:

- (a) include at least 600 dwellings in total;

- (b) learn from the best examples in Australia and overseas to deliver a project that cements Canberra's international reputation as a liveable city;
- (c) showcase on a national and international stage, and provide a springboard for growth for, the ACT's best designers and construction industry companies;
- (d) advance the quality of development in the ACT through:
 - (i) delivery of world best practice environmental performance, including demonstration of carbon neutral buildings and life-cycle environmental impact analysis;
 - (ii) achieving sustainable transport usage substantially above similar business-as-usual projects;
 - (iii) demonstrating excellence in construction and design quality;
 - (iv) inclusion of at least one infill project containing high-quality medium-density housing suitable for replication by industry in suburban infill settings;
 - (v) demonstrating the feasibility of delivering mixed socio-economic and mixed-age communities;
 - (vi) inclusion of a substantial proportion of both public and affordable housing;
 - (vii) demonstrating world best practice community engagement, including effective forms of local consultation, and achieving very high levels of community support;
 - (viii) including a high percentage of local industry content across every stage;
 - (ix) close partnerships with industry bodies such as the Master Builders Association, Canberra Business Chamber, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Housing Industry Association;
 - (x) demonstrating planning approaches and potential Territory Plan changes that support both the precincts and ongoing innovation after the precincts are complete; and
 - (xi) demonstrating at least one innovative housing product that is new to the ACT, such as co-housing or long-lease rentals, as well as new housing typologies; and
- (e) meet the following timeframes:
 - (i) announcement of the site/s and quantitative performance targets against the requirements in 2(d) above within one year;
 - (ii) completion of the master plan/s within two years;

- (iii) commencement of the construction of dwellings within three years;
- (iv) completion of construction of dwellings within eight years; and
- (v) six-monthly reporting of progress to the Assembly and the ACT community until completion.

Madam Speaker, the ACT has historically led Australia in many aspects of development and housing. We have been a planned and designed city right from the beginning. The Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin design for the inner areas of Canberra is renowned throughout the world.

In more recent history, we were at the forefront of design in Australia on water-sensitive urban design. We were an early adopter of the approach of using lakes and wetlands as retarding basins and to improve the quality of urban run-off. Now this approach is mandatory throughout almost all of Australia. In the late 1990s, we led the way on highly walkable, mixed-use precincts. Gungahlin Town Centre was one of the first new, street-focused town centres in Australia, and Gungahlin is reaping the benefit of this leadership. Its town centre has far more street life than Woden, Belconnen or Tuggeranong town centres do, and the rest of Australia has copied from this.

But we are falling behind. We have had a few good new developments—New Acton and Crace spring to mind—but nothing that leads the way internationally and nationally. Most of the things that we talked about when I first started in the Assembly in 2008, like carbon-neutral buildings and improving the quality of infill, we are still talking about but we are not actually doing anything.

The world has moved forward but we have stood still. Europe in particular is developing housing mixed-use precincts that are far ahead of us on almost every measure. For example, the Hammarby urban renewal precinct in Stockholm, Sweden, is comparable with Kingston Foreshore in that they were built and planned in the same era, are both mixed-use waterfront precincts built on a former industrial area, are similar distances from their CBDs and have similar building heights.

But, unlike Kingston Foreshore, Hammarby has been delivered to extremely high environmental standards in areas such as waste, energy and water management. It has reduced its residents' heating needs by 50 per cent over normal Swedish practice, which, given the temperature in Sweden, is a huge achievement. It has been so successful in achieving these standards that its approach is now known internationally as the "Hammarby model".

So what can we do here? One option, which is obviously what I am proposing today in my motion, is a demonstration housing precinct. I would like to acknowledge here that members of Canberra's design and construction industries have been pushing for a demonstration housing precinct for some time, notably the ACT Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects.

Demonstration housing precincts are an approach where government partners with industry, the community and researchers to develop housing that is well above the normal standard. These precincts deliver innovative design, construction and planning processes to be tested. They also allow the testing of the financial viability of new approaches. Buyers get to see and to demonstrate whether in fact there is demand for innovative housing. Industry skill levels grow through best practice projects, and local industry capabilities are showcased, providing a boost for the participating companies, both their profile and their marketing.

Demonstration precincts are a popular approach in Europe. For example, Germany has a long history of international building exhibitions, which are very similar to what we are talking about here. In Hamburg they ran one from 2006 to 2013. It had over 70 projects and over 1,200 new homes. Most of the work was carried out by the private sector, with quality agreements in the contracts to ensure that outcomes were very high.

In Australia the federal government's better cities program in the early 1990s included demonstration precincts around the country, and these were largely considered to be successful. A great example is the Pyrmont-Ultimo redevelopment area in Sydney. One of the big issues at that time was inner city renewal, with most of the larger cities having substantial dock and industrial areas around the CBD that were pretty run down. The Pyrmont-Ultimo project resulted in renewal of a large, run-down industrial area, with delivery of improved public transport, extensive new private and public housing, and new community facilities. This project set the standard for other such precincts around Australia.

Demonstration precincts work by getting over the three biggest barriers to change in the housing market. One of the big barriers to innovation and improvement is that developers and builders are limited in what they can do by financial risk. If they try to do something new and it goes badly, this could often cost them their whole business, so they play safe. In a demonstration precinct, the government can share some of the risk.

A second barrier is that, while many architects and designers have great ideas for how things could be designed better, they need to have a willing client. Through the demonstration precinct, the government again shares the selling risk and gives designers a chance to try out their ideas.

A third barrier is the planning system. The planning system always plays it safe because it is a compromise between what developers want—and they will generally want flexibility and the most returns they can get—and residents, who understandably want to block poor quality development that could have a negative impact on their neighbourhood. The planning system is also inherently slow to change, so the rules in place now were often agreed to 10 or 20 years ago. That is certainly the case in Canberra. Demonstration precincts give a chance for a hands-on design process involving both the local community and industry, and they can test out new planning approaches.

There are many areas where Canberra's approach to housing needs to be improved, in my opinion. I list a lot of them in 2(d) of the motion, but I will particularly talk about three of them. The first is infill. If we want Canberra to become a more compact city, we need to have infill. But at present infill is a minefield. The planning rules for infill are often detailed and inflexible, and many years old. This means that they are blocking as much good development as bad development. However, it is very hard to change these rules, because communities have often been burnt by bad infill. The last thing communities want is looser rules, because of this. And yet I hear again and again from our community that they would support infill development if only it were better quality. To break this impasse, my motion requires that at least one of the demonstration precincts focus specifically on improved medium-density infill.

The second is housing products and typologies. Research by organisations like the Grattan Institute shows that the housing market does not always provide the housing we as a community want. Instead it provides the housing that buyers of new homes want, and they of course are only a small part of the community. For many years in Canberra, in particular, infill was dominated by one-bedroom apartments. This was not because that was where most people wanted to live, necessarily. It was because investors wanted to buy one-bedroom apartments to rent them out because this was the easiest way, arguably, to access tax concessions on investment properties, and thus financially the better deal.

The third issue is housing affordability. Clearly Canberra has an issue with housing affordability. We just debated public housing provision this morning and we did so also in the last sitting period. We have the second-highest rate of homelessness in Australia. In today's *Canberra Times* we had Families ACT executive officer, Will Mollison, saying that some women would spend winter sleeping in cars to escape domestic violence.

There have been many suggestions for solving the housing problem, and I suspect the solution will have many facets, but a housing demonstration precinct could showcase some of the possible solutions. Many people have suggested to me "tiny houses" as a solution. I am not really sure they are a long-term solution but certainly a more flexible approach to housing sizes could be part of a solution. I have also had a number of suggestions of more innovative ownership models. These include housing co-ops, co-housing, shared equity and long-term rental models.

Given that we now have a significant number of long-term tenants, we need to look at this. These people want better tenure than a month by month lease. Long leases, say five years, are common in some countries overseas. They give the tenant a feeling of security that they can stay in their home, and this means they can invest in improvements around the home that they will never do on a short lease. They can plant a garden, which is a wonderful asset.

In conclusion, I want to make two points to emphasise why this motion should be supported. Firstly I reiterate the point I made earlier about industry support. This motion is not a thought bubble I came up with one night last week. The motion is

based on what I have been hearing from people in the housing industry and, in particular, members of the Australian Institute of Architects. We in Canberra have a number of excellent architects who believe in this city and want to see it improve. They can see that our housing market is not producing the high quality homes it could be, and they know it needs to be pushed forward. What they have called for, and desperately need, is a demonstration precinct that allows them to move the quality of our housing forward.

Second, this idea is not new to the government. The planning minister's statement of intent from November 2015, which I quote from, says, as an immediate action:

Identify a number of demonstration precincts across Canberra to undergo an innovative planning process to guide future change and sustainable development.

Given this, I am very confident that the government is in a position to move forward quickly with delivering on my motion.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (6.10): I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing on this motion. I do have an amendment to the motion that I have circulated. I understand that it is supported by the mover. With that, I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT has historically led Australia in development quality, for example, in the late 1990s, Kingston Foreshore and Gungahlin Town Centre were leading showcases of street-based mixed-use development;
- (b) nationally and internationally, best practice has moved forward since the 1990s, for example, leading precincts in Europe are delivering profitable, high-quality, environmentally-sustainable housing, including substantial affordable housing;
- (c) in 'Canberra: A Statement of Ambition', the Chief Minister states that 'we need more than a 'business as usual' approach to achieve our potential and deliver the successful, equitable and sustainable city Canberrans seek';
- (d) the Minister for Planning and Land Management's Statement of Planning Intent and the New Experimental Architecture Typologies (NEAT) competition include delivering demonstration housing projects;
- (e) demonstration precincts are important as they test innovative design, construction and planning processes, prove the financial viability of new approaches, increase industry skill levels, drive demand for innovative products and showcase local industry capabilities;

- (f) Canberra's design and construction sectors include world-class skills and could provide highly-competitive export firms for the ACT;
 - (g) Canberra's research and academic community includes world-class skills in areas such as design and renewable energy;
 - (h) housing affordability is a challenge the ACT Government continues to address;
 - (i) there is increasing desire in the community for greater housing choice, including options for ageing-in-place;
 - (j) the environmental impact of housing comes from construction, occupation, renovation and eventual demolition and it is important to consider the impact of all phases; and
 - (k) feedback from the community and industry stakeholders is that they want to be included early in discussions about future planning ideas and decisions; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) engage with the community and industry stakeholders on how best to deliver a housing demonstration project that promotes best practice environmental performance, including:
 - (i) excellence in construction and design quality;
 - (ii) carbon neutral buildings;
 - (iii) medium density infill;
 - (iv) innovative planning and engagement approaches;
 - (v) innovative housing products and typologies;
 - (vi) close partnership with industry bodies; and
 - (vii) options for public and affordable housing; and
 - (b) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day in November 2017, with a plan for delivery of a housing demonstration project, with detailed planning work to begin during this term of government.”.

In moving this amendment to the private members' business notice before us on the world-leading demonstration housing precincts, I would invite members to reflect on the many challenges Canberra faces as it grows and transitions into a major city. Canberra's qualities as a most livable place are well recognised. The qualities of being a city in the bush mixed with today's urban lifestyles are the same qualities that attract our key knowledge economy workers and will give us a competitive edge over other Australian cities in the future. In common with other cities across Australia and

around the globe, how we manage urban renewal, improve economic prosperity, accommodate a changing community and build resilience to climate change will contribute to our successful future.

Encouraging innovation through the design of housing as well as the wider built environment is fundamental to this end. Demonstration precincts showcasing leading best practice can provide the community and industry with examples of how flexibility and innovation in planning can result in a more livable, sustainable community. I identified this as a key priority in my statement of planning intent in 2015.

When asked by Ms Le Couteur in March this year to identify some current demonstration precincts as described in my statement of planning intent—that was question No 122—the examples I identified were Kamberra on Federal, 595 Northbourne Avenue in Lyneham and the Dickson group centre working with local traders—and a shout out here to Jhay the Cobbler at Dickson. These examples illustrate the strong diversity of approaches available to government to partner with industry and the community to advance demonstration precincts. They have also demonstrated to me the value of early discussions and engagement with key stakeholders. My amendment proposes that engagement with the community and industry stakeholders happens now so that these discussions can focus on how best to deliver housing demonstration projects that promote best-practice environmental performance.

I am keen to frame the conversation with the community and industry stakeholders on this important matter. To my mind, the important issues to consider are excellence in construction and design quality, carbon neutral buildings, medium-density infill, innovative planning and engagement approaches, innovative housing products and topologies, close partnership with industry bodies and options for public and affordable housing as well.

I will now briefly describe why I identified these matters to be part of the conversation, although I expect other important matters will emerge through the discussion. Firstly, on excellence in construction and design quality, the ACT government showed its support for high quality construction in the budget announced yesterday by fully funding the improvement of the ACT building regulatory system reforms which I announced last year after consultation with the community and the industry.

I anticipate working with a wide range of industry members to make the most of these opportunities to lift the quality of construction in the ACT. I use the term “industry” broadly here because there are many people who can contribute to and benefit from working on a demonstration precinct and innovative housing models. This includes housing providers and managers, training providers, property practitioners such as valuers, conveyancers and facility and strata managers, product suppliers and people working in the construction, legal and financial sectors.

Then there are carbon neutral buildings. The ACT will achieve its commitment to 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020. This provides an excellent base for buildings to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

Good design that maximises the comfort of occupants and minimises the energy they need to use also helps reduce energy demand and contributes to the territory reaching its zero emissions targets. Demonstration precincts and projects have the ability to encourage climate-wise development and alteration of existing and new buildings by owners and developers. Achieving sufficient knowledge and upskilling of building and construction practitioners together with built environment design professionals will ensure that Canberra buildings are climate-wise using contemporary building materials and techniques to ensure the amenity, character and livability of Canberra for future generations.

Then there is medium-density infill. We know from recent community and stakeholder engagement activities that Canberrans generally support a more compact city. We know that they want more housing choice and affordability, better quality urban design and sustainability in new developments. As part of the government's work on the city and gateway urban renewal strategy, a new approach is being considered to deliver better urban design outcomes for new development in the city centre and along Northbourne Avenue.

While primary controls for the built form outcomes are set by the National Capital Authority, there is opportunity for the ACT government to collaborate with the NCA to achieve innovative and sustainable design outcomes in this significant location. A refresh of the relevant precinct codes in the Territory Plan could propose simplification of rules and criteria and introduce a performance-based approach to access new development. My directorate is currently benchmarking urban design guidelines in use in other jurisdictions such as the successful New South Wales model of state of environment planning policy 65, design quality of residential flat development or SEPP65. These area-specific and design-driven codes will achieve innovative and sustainable built form outcomes in this key urban renewal area.

There are also innovative planning and engagement approaches. One of the key priorities in my statement of planning intent is delivering an outcome-focused planning system to reward design excellence and innovation. Illustrating how the government is encouraging innovative planning approaches is the current work to establish a design review panel to improve the quality of design outcomes for new development across Canberra. Importantly, we are progressing this in partnership with the NCA to ensure a consistently high quality of design across the city regardless of which planning body is the decision-maker.

The panel will consist of a range of experts from the built environment sector who will offer objective and independent advice on incoming development applications. I am taking on board the learnings from design review panels elsewhere in other states of Australia to ensure that our approach here adds significant value to incentivising

innovation for high quality design urban renewal. An initial panel will be established over the next few months to pilot the design review process before the final panel is established next year.

We have also got innovative housing products and topologies. The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate initiated a housing topologies project which is based on a proposal from the ACT Chapter of the Institute of Architects, a project to demonstrate innovative housing topologies not commonly seen in Canberra. The NEAT design competition was run by the ACT chapter of the institute in 2014 and generated ideas for innovative and affordable compact dwellings. My directorate is currently taking these learnings about innovative and affordable compact dwellings to investigate approaches to provide diversity and innovation in housing products, particularly to support the government's affordable housing initiatives.

We have also got close partnerships with industry bodies and, with the range of development opportunities that exist in our city in the near future, we want to encourage opportunities for innovation and new design thinking in the built form. The government is keen to continue working with industry and the community to deliver housing demonstration projects that promote best-practice environmental performance and urban design.

Collaboration and shared vision and responsibilities between government, industry and community members are the keys to future innovation. The current collaboration at the Ginninderry development in west Belconnen illustrates the potential to achieve positive planning outcomes through partnership. Through the engagement activities proposed in my amendment, a stronger product can be scoped and shared going forward.

We also have options for public and affordable housing. The ninth parliamentary agreement calls for a new, affordable housing strategy to deliver more affordable housing options. This reflects the wider agreement on improving housing affordability being essential to ensuring that secure accommodation is available to all Canberrans and that home ownership remains a realistic goal.

We are also committed to setting affordable housing targets across both greenfield and urban renewal development projects. The new City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency will have targets set to guide the delivery of affordable community and public housing.

Cities and their delivery partners face complex choices about what type of future they are seeking to create in order to meet the aspirations of the citizens. Here in the ACT we are already well advanced in our thinking about these many challenges and the options for how we will respond moving forward. Different sectors of our community will also have different visions and ideas, reflecting their changing needs and circumstances. It is important for government to facilitate discussions with and between all those interested in the quality of the built form in Canberra to ensure that all voices are listened to and innovation becomes our norm.

To conclude, I commit to reporting back to the Assembly by the last sitting day in November 2017 on a plan for the delivery of a housing demonstration project which addresses the matters that I have spoken about today.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.21): I rise today to speak on Ms Le Couteur's motion regarding the development of demonstration precincts in the ACT. I would like to thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing forward such an interesting motion and to say that in principle we agree with many aspects of this motion.

It is easy to see that around us the world is changing rapidly and these changes within our community mean that our housing requirements and preferences change as well. These include things such as, but not limited to, the ageing of the population, economic conditions that may make it difficult for young people to purchase a home and get into the housing market, and growing population. There is also the need to fit potentially more people into less space, and that will shape the future of home design.

We often talk about the great Australian dream of home ownership. It has been a longstanding desire of many Australians to own their own piece of suburbia. But we are moving away more and more, it would appear, from that dream of a block of land in suburbia with the Hills hoist in the back yard and a barbecue on the back patio to having, for many people, an apartment in the city with a joint washer/dryer and a few restaurants and cafes with good coffee within walking distance. While the styles and desires might be changing, the great Australian dream remains for most Australians and certainly for many people in the ACT.

In past generations some families moved to the ACT with that desire to own their own affordable house. But for the next generation, for my children and my grandchildren, that is becoming increasingly difficult. But by being innovative, by supporting innovation in the housing industry, we can try to make the Australian dream a bit more achievable for people, and that is why we agree with many parts of this motion.

The use of urban infill is one way that we can assist to do this but we must make sure that this is in line with community expectation, that the properties of the future are of good design and are innovative, that planning requirements do not stifle design and that the private sector and the market lead the process so that we can discover what truly works and what does not. We will discover what people will buy and what they will not. Having the private sector lead that process is usually the best way to determine that.

We must also allow risks so that those who invest have opportunity for reward. We also need to think about the full spectrum, the full range of the housing continuum. Ms Le Couteur referred to tiny houses which is just one very small example on that housing continuum. Whether it is tiny houses, apartments, units, there are a whole lot of different models of ownership as well that need to be considered—and there is home ownership and there is rental—because there are some people who do not want to own their own home and may never want to own their own home and we must enable them to fully participate in the housing spectrum as well.

But we must give the architects, the builders and the designers, the opportunity to showcase their skills. But at the moment under some of the planning rules that is stifled and it is very difficult for them to showcase their skills.

One thing that occurred to me in the discussion we have had so far is that, whilst we have touched on Ginninderry as one example of a joint partnership that is going well, what we have not talked about is the CSIRO site at Ginninderra. I refer to a *Canberra Times* article of 29 March last year which talked about a workshop that they were holding and looking to experts for proper integration of affordable housing options as part of a new community. The workshop included experts from universities, social service agencies, charities, banks and financial institutions who came together for an affordable housing think tank in Canberra on 8 April.

According to this article, the CSIRO were to engage a consortium or joint development partner for redevelopment. The article also went on to talk about the elements that they wanted to address in this 701-hectare area. That included this quote from the article:

... ensuring we delivered a benchmark in urban sustainable design in Australia. One of the other issues identified as key is addressing affordable housing.

“We’ve invited experts along, both ACT and interstate based leaders in a range of areas, including architecture and building design, financing, home ownership models, community housing people and energy efficiency.”

The article also went on to quote ACT Shelter Executive Officer Travis Gilbert, who welcomed the think-tank event and said that the CSIRO was committed to incorporating the needs of affordable housing consumers.

For reasons best known to the government they have chosen not to engage with the CSIRO on the Ginninderra site, at least to date in the public realm. But the CSIRO site would be using many experts in sustainable design et cetera and could well address some of the needs that Ms Le Couteur’s motion has already referred to.

I think what you could see from this discussion today is that we agree in principle with the motion put forward by Ms Le Couteur. But I think the motion includes too much restraint to be practical at this time. The demonstration buildings need to have the fluidity to fully develop and implement innovative designs.

Mr Gentleman’s amendment about looking at excellence in construction and design quality, carbon neutral buildings, medium-density infill, innovative planning and engagement approaches, innovative housing products and typologies, close partnership with industry bodies, options for public and affordable housing and reporting back to the Assembly by the last sitting day in November this year would, we feel, meet the needs at this time.

But I would note that in his amendment Mr Gentleman mentions calling on the government to engage with the community. I must confess I am a little sceptical about

exactly how this would be done because we have been hearing recently a lot of concerns about consultation and engagement with the community. I encourage Mr Gentleman and his government to take very seriously engaging with the community.

Mindful of the time, I would like once again to thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing forward the motion and to thank members of her staff for the very constructive way that they have engaged with staff in my office about this motion. Potentially there are some lessons for Minister Gentleman about the way his office could engage with me and my staff in terms of consultation because that has been a little lacking in my experience recently. It is a bit hard to get information. Consultation is the key to getting good outcomes for the community.

Therefore we have no hesitation in passing the amendment from Mr Gentleman to this very interesting motion from Ms Le Couteur and I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing it forward today.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (6.30): I rise to thank Mr Gentleman and Ms Lawder for their contributions. Were it earlier in the day I would talk at greater length about the various issues that everyone has raised but suffice it to say that I am pleased to welcome the Assembly's support for demonstration housing precincts, and I look forward to hearing about significant progress in November.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Health—rare cancer funding

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (6.31): Members may be aware that in November last year the commonwealth parliament established a Select Committee into Funding for Research into Cancers with Low Survival Rates to inquire and report on the impact of health research funding models on the availability of funding for research into cancers with low survival rates.

The committee will hold public hearings in Canberra on Friday this week. A number of Canberrans have made submissions but not all have the opportunity to speak. For the record, tonight I would like to let members know of one story, and I welcome Sarah and Tom McGoram here today to the chamber. This is Sarah's story:

My name is Sarah McGoram.

I'm a 38 year old mum living in Canberra Australia with my husband and our 10 year old son. When I was 18, I was diagnosed with Gastro Intestinal Stromal Tumor (GIST) and was told my disease had no cure and I was likely to have about one year left to live. There was no cure in 1996.

There is still no known cure 21 years later. GIST is a rare cancer with low survival rates. For almost 20 years, my doctors and I have been fighting this disease. There have been 250 days in hospital, 40+ blood transfusions, more than 60 CT scans, and 7 major operations. None of these treatments can cure the disease; they've simply been a fight against the symptoms while we wait for an effective drug to be developed.

We have a 10 year old son. He is a brave young boy dealing with the constant uncertainty of my disease. When we talked to him about my cancer two years ago he calmly replied, "Well cancer is bad. Now the doctors just need to find a medicine to make it go away so you don't have to keep cutting the tumors out. Once they do that then everything will be fine! Don't you think Mummy—that sounds do-able." At 8 years old, he got it in one. It is as simple as that. All we need is time for the doctors to develop a drug that makes the cancer go away.

Over the past 10 years a number of drugs have been able to slow the progression of the tumors, buying me time. I have been lucky that these have been covered by Australia's Pharmaceutical benefit scheme, but the drugs lose effectiveness over time. There are more drugs available but they are not funded by the PBS. The cost of all future treatment will need to be met ourselves. To put this in perspective, the average cost of the drugs to treat GIST is about \$280 about per day or about \$100,000+ a year. I have exhausted the approved line of treatment from the PBS. GIST has approved treatment of Imatinib and Sutent. These treatments have helped control my disease in the past. In 2015 we were told we had exhausted all PBS approved treatments to control my disease. The next line of treatment (Regorafenib) was not approved for GIST, so would cost about \$10,000 a month. What I found heartbreaking is Regorafenib is approved by the PBS in Australia for other cancers. I could stand at the chemist next to someone with a different type of cancer, yet taking the same drug and it would cost me \$10,000 and they would pay about \$50. We were told it is unlikely there will ever be enough data for Regorafenib to be approved for GIST because it is so rare. With the current PBS funding model, it is nearly impossible for rare cancers like GIST to have enough data to become eligible for additional lines of treatment from from the PBS. The combination of having a low survival cancer and rare cancer means there are not many of us alive in Australia to provide adequate data. (In 2015 we were very lucky to be accepted in a compassionate access program by Bayer. They currently cover the cost of my medication saving us over \$100,000 in the past year. This treatment is currently controlling my disease. We are also turning to crowdfunding/personal fundraising to provide future treatment options.)

I do not believe the current funding model for treatment of rare cancer and low survival cancers passes the common sense test. My next line of treatment is likely to be a return to Imatinib (my first line of treatment 2010-2012). There is evidence from clinical trials that returning to Imatinib (after a few years break) could control my disease. Imatinib is only approved by PBS as a first line of treatment for GIST. Therefore, if I start taking Imatinib again it will not be

subsidised. I will have to pay approximately \$10,000 a month for the exact same treatment that cost me \$36 a month in 2010-2012. Imatinib controlled my disease in the past and there is evidence it could control my disease in the future, but because of the structure of the approval process combined with limited data available (due to GIST being rare with a low survival rate) we will have to pay over \$120,000 a year to control my disease. This does not pass the common sense test and shows the challenges that patients of rare and low survival cancer face.

I've actively participated in every medical research clinical trial available in an effort to find a cure for GIST cancer. I am eager and ready for any clinical trial available in the future, but funding for trials for rare and low survival cancers is so tough. There are currently no clinical trials running that I am eligible for.

I am 38 years old and have had cancer for the majority of my life. Over the past 20 years I have seen the survival rate of many high profile common cancers increase significantly.

(Extension of time granted.)

I have not seen that happen with my disease or many of the rare and low survival cancers.

I would be grateful for the committee to consider restructuring the current funding for low survival cancers to enable provisions and *provide equity* for patients with rare cancers and low survival cancers like mine.

Sincerely,

Sarah McGoram.

Madam Speaker, as an MLA and as health minister, you cannot help but be moved by Sarah's story and bravery. As a friend, knowing her sense of humour, which is exceptional, and their bravery and compassion as a family, her story does not quite tell that side of it. But I wanted to read her story into the record this evening, and I also will be writing to our federal members and members of the committee to urge them to consider Sarah's and many other stories to get some progress and some improvement into the funding for research into cancers are low survival rates.

MADAM SPEAKER: We wish you and your family well.

Belconnen Community Service

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (6.37): I rise today to express thanks to Belconnen Community Service, or BCS, which serves ACT residents in my electorate of Ginninderra. BCS coordinates with community members and other organisations to deliver a broad range of services to individuals and families in the Belconnen region, with the focus on supporting self-determination and reducing social isolation.

Concerned with the entire Belconnen community, BCS encourages people to volunteer both for their own programs and for other organisations. It was my privilege a few weeks ago to meet participants in the step up for volunteering program sponsored by BCS. Participants took a walk around Lake Ginninderra to celebrate volunteers, and a number of local community organisations were set up along the route to provide information about volunteering opportunities.

I hope that many of those who participated on the day, and many others, will take advantage of opportunities to get involved in serving their community. Unfortunately, many people seem to think that they are too busy, but the fact is that no matter how busy we are, we can always find time to volunteer.

I recently read about three high school boys who volunteered their time once a month as puppeteers for children at their local hospital. Like many students, these young men have lives filled with studies, sport, helping at home and socialising with friends. But they have learnt that just a few hours one day a month can make a real difference by bringing a smile to a child's face. One of them said:

It's not like it takes special people to be able to give service. It's not difficult and it's not necessarily very time consuming. I don't think enough people give service.

For those who genuinely think that they are too busy to be volunteers, I offer the following statistics. Data from Roy Morgan Research revealed that on average Australians aged 14 and over currently spend more than 18 hours per week watching television and over 13 hours per week using the internet at home. At the same time the latest numbers from Volunteering Australia indicate that the median time Australians spend volunteering each week is just over one hour. Excessive TV and internet use have both been linked by research to depression, and, of course, we are all very well aware of the effects that hours of sitting have on physical health. Volunteering on the other hand is positively correlated with both physical and mental wellbeing.

One of the most important links between volunteering and wellbeing is how it provides a more realistic and balanced context for our personal lives. As one wise teacher has noted:

When we are engaged in the service of our fellow man, not only do our deeds assist them, but we put our own problems in a fresher perspective. When we concern ourselves more with others, there is less time to be concerned with ourselves.

Volunteering enriches and lifts not only the giver and the receiver but the entire community. It is clear that Belconnen Community Service understands this reality, seeking to build on and empower all the residents of Belconnen by encouraging a culture of active volunteering. For this, I am thankful, and I encourage all Canberrans to choose today, if they have not already done so, to make time and space in their lives to serve others.

Giralang community park

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (6.40): At our last sitting I had the privilege of sponsoring two petitions from over 180 Canberrans. The petitioners called for the ACT government to fund in the 2017-18 budget a 2016 election commitment for Giralang community park. The Giralang community showed their support for this park, as I have mentioned before in the chamber, and their strong desire to be included in decision-making for their suburb.

Yesterday I was thrilled to confirm that the Labor government had listened to Giralang and committed the funding for the park in this year's budget. I am proud to represent Giralang, and would like to thank residents for their trust and willingness to get on board, and participate in politics. I have certainly received a few puzzled looks and remarks about the need to run a petition, as a member of the government, and I would like to clarify, as a backbencher, that I am not privy to budget decisions, but I do have extra opportunity to be out in the electorate and work with the community. I very much went forward with the philosophy that we are stronger when we work together.

I would also like to thank the ACT government for their responsiveness. This is a great way to be encouraging more nature into our suburbs. It is important we do this as the natural environment has a great capacity to enrich the built environment of our city. Integration between these two elements can be done through well-considered planning and engagement with the community.

Giralang is a Radburn suburb, one that was designed for community use, for the environment and for pedestrians. The footpaths in Giralang, like many Belconnen suburbs, lead to a central point where the community can come together. In Giralang, this central area is currently home to the Giralang Primary School, the preschool and the Chabad centre, with the community centre and playing fields nearby. This park provides a focal point at the heart of Giralang for everyone to come together. Parks provide a recreation space for everyone, for kids to play and for adults to get together and have a chat.

I am a firm believer in community engagement, and the specific elements of the park should, in my opinion, be based on what the community wants, which is why in the coming months I plan to engage the Giralang community very closely to get their perspective on options for their park. This park should be flexible to the community's needs, and take the surrounding area into account. I have already had many ideas put to me over the last few months from residents, including for a fire pole, which we will investigate, and other things that local groups want to see in the space so that it reaches its full potential. I hope this space will serve as a demonstration of what we can achieve through community engagement, and I look forward to working further with the Giralang community to develop a plan for their park.

**Woden town centre
Kambah village**

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (6.43): Our government is committed to urban renewal in our town centres. I want to update the Assembly today on the government's recent Woden roundtable and the budget funding in relation to Kambah village.

Woden is a great place to live, but our town centre is in need of urban renewal. It is clear that after years of cuts and relocations to the public service federally, Woden cannot rely purely on public servants for its future. That is why mixed-use development, with people working but also living in the town centre, close to work and public transport, is so important.

The master plan and the Territory Plan variations provide this vision. They were out for comment until 2 June, which provided an opportunity for a discussion, as we have seen, about Woden's renewal, though this is only the start of the Woden renewal project.

The investment in light rail stage 2 from the city to Woden is going to provide more opportunities to drive this sort of urban renewal, just as it has along Northbourne Avenue. As we speak, community consultation on this project is currently underway on the route, alignment and light rail stops. Just over the past week we have seen the proposal for a transit-oriented development at 15 Bowes Street, next to the Woden bus interchange, which would see more people living next to our quality public transport system.

I am also pleased that the government funded the development of an urban renewal strategy around light rail in the budget yesterday. Our growing city means there are huge opportunities in Woden to have more people living in the town centre core, but if we are going to have more people living there, we need to consider how we make sure the spaces are a place for people and families to live, not just work.

That is why I called on the government to host a roundtable on Woden's renewal back in March. It is important that everyone who has a stake in Woden is involved in the opportunities and works together as we build urban renewal in Woden, especially as there is a role for both the government and private business and the community in this renewal and the benefits that come with it.

Following the Chief Minister's agreement to the roundtable in the Assembly, the meeting took place on 25 May in the new ACT health building, itself quite symbolic of the change the government is leading in Woden. The commercial building at 6 Bowes Street has recently been upgraded to a modern office space. It can accommodate up to 750 public servants who we have moved to Woden in the Health Directorate. This is in addition to the 300 that we have moved into Access Canberra's Cosmopolitan building.

At the roundtable, there was a robust discussion amongst participants about Woden's future. I am pleased to say that by bringing together key stakeholders, ranging from

ministers to senior public servants, developers, businesses and community groups, we now have everyone working together with better communication and understanding so that we can get on and deliver the urban renewal that Woden needs.

There was a wide consensus on the need to increase residential and mixed use development in the town centre so that we can improve the vibrancy and viability of the town centre as the role of the federal public service diminishes. We also discussed how we can improve development and planning policies to ensure that developments take into account the whole precinct and public realm. There was also broad agreement around making Woden a place for people, even after 5 pm and on the weekend, with great public spaces and planning for our community facility needs, particularly given the growth of Woden Community Service over recent years.

Business put a very strong view that providing certainty through the Territory Plan is crucial to encourage investment. I would like to thank Minister Gentleman for convening the roundtable. He and EPSD are committed to continue to work with organisations at the roundtable on the urban renewal project into the future, particularly as light rail progresses. It will be the largest single infrastructure project in Woden's history.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to comment in relation to our investment in Kambah in the budget. I am pleased to say that work is now underway on the upgrades to Kambah village. At the election, Labor committed \$2.3 million to upgrade Kambah village. I am incredibly proud that the ACT government has now funded stage 2 of the works in the budget. An additional \$2 million will deliver new toilets, an upgraded playground with shade structure, and an extension of the central courtyard's spine to the south-east of the centre. It will include new paving, more shade trees and seating areas, plus a formalised waste collection shelter. Of course, that is in addition to stage 1 of the works, which is already underway at the centre.

These upgrades are delivering on the Kambah group centre master plan. Combined with the expected private development to upgrade and expand Woolworths and add extra retail spaces, these upgrades will make a huge difference to my suburb. Over 2,000 people in Kambah signed my petition last year calling on the shops to be upgraded. It is great to see work begin. *(Time expired.)*

Budget—Belconnen

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (6.48): Madam Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to say a few words about the initiatives in the budget for Belconnen. I am proud of this government and I am proud that it is delivering on its election commitments, especially through the ACT budget announced yesterday. In particular, I want to note the range of excellent initiatives to serve the Belconnen community. I am really looking forward to talking with people about them over the coming weeks and months.

The first of these is \$15 million to complete Belconnen Arts Centre. Madam Speaker, I know that you know how long that has been the subject of an active campaign by

many people in the community, including the volunteers, staff and board at the Belconnen Arts Centre, as well as there being huge community backing for that. I am very pleased that the \$15 million will include new workshop, performance and exhibition spaces. I am sure it is going to be a great delight for everyone to experience what that will be like when it is realised, and it will be realised because of what has been committed in the budget.

There is also \$16 million to operationalise the University of Canberra public hospital. A lot of people have been watching with great interest to see what is happening with the public hospital. It is growing day by day; the building is looking fantastic. Of course, we have to staff that building: we have to make sure we have people who are clinically trained and ready to go once that building opens in mid-2018. That \$16 million will see us there.

Something I am particularly excited about as a Belconnen town centre resident is the Belco bikeway, a separated bikepath which will help connect the major landmarks in the town centre and also help connect the town centre to the neighbouring suburbs and, importantly, the University of Canberra. At the moment, the University of Canberra kind of has its back to the Belconnen town centre; the separated bikepath will do a great deal to help connect it. We have a major road that is currently separating the suburbs of Page and Florey from the Belconnen town centre, as well as Lawson. The separated bikepath is going to make a really big difference to that, connecting so many suburbs to the heart of Belconnen, the town centre. On top of that, we have early planning for the expansion of Bindubi Street and planning upgrades to William Hovell Drive.

Our schools are also doing quite well out of this budget. Lake Ginninderra college, Aranda Primary School and Melba Copland are sharing in the \$85 million for school classroom and facility upgrades that are happening across Canberra. On top of that, we have \$5.9 million to continue Belconnen High School's modernisation, and that is on top of \$20 million that has already been invested in that school. It will include equipment upgrades and refurbishment, including replacing some roofs and enhancing some of the technology spaces. I know that the students and staff there are very much looking forward to it, and I thank them for the tour that they provided me and Minister Berry a few weeks ago.

In addition to that—wait: there is more!—we have a new black rapid bus route between Belconnen and Gungahlin. For the first two months, there will be free travel on that. And Page will share with the suburb of Hughes in \$1.5 million for better footpaths, crossings and traffic islands, making it a more age-friendly suburb.

It is pretty exciting what we are going to see happening in Belconnen over the next little while. Belconnen is a strong, vibrant community. These budget initiatives will ensure that Belconnen continues to remain a great place to live, a great place to work and a great place to play.

Budget—election promises

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (6.52): During the election campaign I said many times that a vibrant, sustainable and inclusive city does not create itself; these cities are built by governments with a vision for a better future. Many people during the campaign spoke to me about ensuring that Kurrajong, the heart of Canberra, is responsive, well designed and supports those in need. This is exactly what the 2017-18 ACT budget delivers.

As I noted in my inaugural speech, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that the Northbourne Avenue corridor and the city, the entrance to our bush capital and the heart of Canberra, are revitalised in a way that we can be proud of for generations to come.

This is a government with a vision for a better future, that delivers on it and that will deliver on its vision for urban renewal. In the city and Northbourne corridor, this work will be led in part by the new city renewal authority. I am very pleased that this authority will clearly and decisively take a design-led approach.

The budget delivers on the election commitments Labor made to the community during the election, such as the new green rapid bus routes to connect Woden to the city through Manuka and Barton. Not only will this connect people from Woden to Manuka and Barton, and Barton and Manuka to the city, but it will also provide a better link for people living in Narrabundah, Griffith and Red Hill, with a more direct route to the city.

The budget also delivers on the expansion of the flexible bus service for residents of the inner north from next year and the development of a Common Ground in Dickson. During the election campaign, and now as I speak with people, it is clear that ensuring all Canberrans are supported, access appropriate services and can enjoy the life and culture of Canberra is a critical concern for the people of Kurrajong. In this budget the government has made good on its commitment to provide better support when it matters. This is illustrated by our commitment to support for people with a disability.

In December I officially launched the office for disability, a commitment we made to demonstrate the ACT government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that the ACT is the most inclusive and accessible city for people with disability that we possibly can be. We also recognise that there have been challenges in how the NDIS is changing the support system for people with disability in the ACT. That is why yesterday's budget provided an additional \$2.2 million to the office for disability, to continue to support the ACT's transition to the NDIS. We are also delivering on our commitment to provide \$200,000 in funding for disability access grants to fund training, increased awareness and infrastructure modifications for community organisations to enable them to include and engage people with disabilities in every aspect of life in our city.

We are delivering on our commitment to develop a disability justice strategy to ensure that people with disability are treated equally before the law and in the justice system. I look forward to working with the disability reference group and all stakeholders on the development of the strategy over the next couple of years.

I would like to thank the many constituents I met with during the election campaign, and the many constituents I continue to meet with at mobile offices and out and about in the electorate. I recognise that their vision for a more inclusive and vibrant Kurrajong community is a vision that is shared by this government and one that we are proud to deliver. The 2017-18 budget builds on our shared vision.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.57 pm.