



# Debates

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## **Wednesday, 20 September 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.

### **Leave of absence**

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

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

## **Government Procurement (Financial Integrity) Amendment Bill 2017**

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

Title read by Clerk.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.01): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am very pleased to present the Government Procurement (Financial Integrity) Amendment Bill. This bill is the first step that the opposition is taking in this Assembly in enacting the six integrity measures announced in my budget reply earlier this year. Its purpose is very simple: to improve integrity in government expenditure. This bill seeks to close any possible loopholes which allow the government to avoid scrutiny and perhaps cover up some decisions. Transparency in government spending is essential but, at a time when Canberrans are financially struggling due to massive increases in rates and taxes, fees and fines, it is vital that the public can better scrutinise how their money is being spent.

As foreshadowed in my budget reply, this bill halves the notifiable invoices threshold to \$12,500. By publishing the payments made by government agencies, the community can scrutinise how their money is being spent. \$12,500 is not an unreasonable or onerous threshold, especially when you consider that the commonwealth has reporting requirements as low as \$10,000. The records of the invoices already exist within the present system. Reducing the notifiable invoices threshold to \$12,500 only requires reporting for an additional three per cent of invoices. Last year nearly 93 per cent of all invoices were under \$12,500.

This bill is not written to be onerous; it is written to strike the right balance between the efficiencies of the public service and the need for improved transparency. This is a relatively minor amendment but has the potential to bring about significant change. The bill also expands on what is included in the notifiable invoice register. Property purchases and reimbursements are not captured by the current legislation, even though millions of dollars have been spent on these in the past. When people pay their

enormous rates bill, they expect their money to be spent efficiently and to serve a cause which is befitting of our community. This amendment bill puts the government on notice that their spending will be reported and the public will be looking to see if they are getting value for money for the taxes that they pay.

The bill has reasonable exceptions and only captures outgoings by the territory. Goods, services, works or property provided by the territory or a territory entity, granting of a licence or lease of land and sales of a lease of land and an invoice prescribed by regulation have been exempted. The inclusion of property in the register will only include acquisitions and will not capture the land releases or sales in new suburbs. The bill also introduces an act of grace payments register to provide greater clarity and increase reporting on payments made under the Treasurer's powers. The existing reporting requirements mean that act of grace payments are only reported once a year and are buried within the financial statements of the entity that the payment is related to.

If we look back at the year 2014-15, act of grace payments worth over \$700,000 were made across all directorates. The year before, there were 11 payments totalling more than \$900,000. This is a significant amount of money and should be published with increased regularity. The register proposed by the bill simply increases the frequency of reporting and consolidates the information in one place. The register would be kept electronically by the relevant director-general, and the director-general may correct any mistake, error or omission in the register.

The register would include substantially the same information as already provided for under section 130 of the Financial Management Act 1996, specifically the date the payment was authorised by the Treasurer, the date of the payment, the amount of the payment, the grounds for the payment, the directorate or territory authority that made the payment and anything else prescribed by regulation. The register may include anything else the director-general considers appropriate.

The responsible directorate or territory authority must, within 21 days after the end of the quarter in which the payment was made, either enter the information in the register or provide it to the director-general for entry in the register. The director-general must ensure, as far as practicable, that a copy of the information contained in the register is accessible on a website approved by the director-general at all times, for at least two years and without charge by the territory.

Importantly, the bill preserves the provision in section 130 in which the directorate or territory authority must not disclose the identity of the payee unless the payee agreed to the disclosure. Recipients of payments will not have any identifying information published in the register. The bill also makes minor consequential amendments to the Government Procurement Regulation 2007, the Taxation Administration Act 1999 and the University of Canberra Act 1989.

I wish to reiterate that the reduction of the notifiable invoices threshold will increase transparency and accountability in government spending. By publishing the payments made by government agencies, the community can scrutinise how their money is

spent. The additional probity related to spending further reinforces procurement principles, including value for money.

This legislation is, in effect, on the back of legislation that I moved in the previous Assembly. Furthermore, the extension of reporting obligations to property, reimbursements and act of grace payments will capture spending that otherwise is difficult to determine or infrequently reported.

Canberrans are paying more and getting less, and they are seeing their hard-earned money being spent on causes that they may not necessarily agree with. But the public do have a right to scrutinise how their money is being spent, and by strengthening the legislation this bill brings greater financial integrity to the ACT government. These amendments are reasonable and are extensions of current processes within the ACT government administration. This bill holds the government to account and ensures greater integrity and transparency in the territory's finances. I urge the Assembly to support this important bill.

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

## **Mitchell—services**

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (10.09): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the important contribution that businesses in Mitchell make to the ACT economy and the considerable amount of revenue collected by Government from Mitchell traders through rates, payroll tax and other fees and charges; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
  - (a) construct a light rail stop at Mitchell;
  - (b) explore what compensation can be offered to businesses severely impacted by the construction of light rail;
  - (c) construct additional all day car parking in Mitchell (especially for workers on the eastern side of Mitchell);
  - (d) detail how Mitchell will be serviced by buses following the operation of light rail;
  - (e) include Mitchell on a regular schedule for street sweeping;
  - (f) improve the urban services delivered in Mitchell, such as footpath and streetlight maintenance; and
  - (g) undertake consultation with businesses in Mitchell about implementing urgent minor capital works in the public realm.

The motion I bring to the Assembly today calls on the ACT Labor government to take actions that, in my view and the view of many local business owners, are the actions that should already be core business for local government. This is also not a new subject matter. I have spoken many times in this place about the important contribution local businesses make to the ACT economy. We, as the lawmakers of the ACT, need to ensure that the policy settings and decisions made by government are conducive for business to firstly start, then grow and prosper.

There are about 300 businesses in Mitchell, employing over 4,000 people. Not unlike other business precincts, such as Hume, Phillip or Fyshwick, Mitchell is no longer just an industrial estate; it has come on in leaps and bounds, offering a diverse range of businesses, including home improvements, retail services and the like. I acknowledge the recent formation of the Mitchell Traders Association, started by Anthony Manning from the Phoenix Gym. The association now has memberships running in excess of 250 businesses and is spearheading a campaign to include a tram stop in Mitchell and to improve the amenity of the area.

There are food businesses, gyms, child care, leisure facilities and many other varied businesses in operation. It is fair to say that all these businesses have been impacted in some way, shape or form by the ongoing construction work along the light rail corridor. Mr Manning has noted that he personally has seen a loss of income in his gym of about 30 per cent, with fewer sales, fewer inquiries and fewer clients turning up to class since the construction of light rail began. He is not alone.

Since October last year, when construction on the light rail project commenced, businesses in Mitchell particularly have endured death by a thousand cuts. Some business owners have called the impact worse than the global financial crisis. The slowdown in trade as a result of construction and traffic delays is bad enough for businesses to endure. However, what has really incensed local businesses and added insult to injury is the fact that light rail will not even have a dedicated stop in Mitchell once construction is completed. In reality, these businesses will effectively have trade completely bypassing them once construction is over and light rail is operational.

The minister has confirmed that this is the case. The minister's excuse for this is that no-one wanted a stop there. The fact is that, whatever consultation was undertaken, it most certainly did not include the business owners and operators at Mitchell. Otherwise they would not be forming such an organisation today, calling on a stop to be placed there. Not once were they asked what they wanted or needed. Not once were they told what to expect in terms of disruption to trade.

The minister has indicated that there may be some consideration of including a light rail stop in future stages of the light rail project. But the facts remain that it is one of the biggest infrastructure projects ever undertaken in the ACT and we have to retrofit stops after construction is completed. This has all the hallmarks of the GDE—a construction project that was finished, ribbons were cut, only to have construction work recommence to make the asset fit for purpose, at great cost to taxpayers. This does not make economic sense and certainly does not display any common sense on the part of this government.

Why not in the first instance change the light rail schedule for the stop being constructed at EPIC on non-event days and allow for some weekday stops at Mitchell? This would maintain the on-time running of the advertised 24-minute travel time. Has this stop been omitted from stage 1 for a reason? Would it perhaps, as I said, impact on that 24-minute travel time? Is the fear that residents of Gungahlin will discover that actually the rapid bus route will get them to where they are going faster than a tram service will? These are the questions that the ACT Labor government have failed to address. However, history will soon judge if the approach that they have taken is the correct one. For businesses in Mitchell, the verdict is clear: they will be adversely impacted unless the government reconsiders and installs a stop in Mitchell.

The question of compensation, which is raised in my motion, is a vexed one. Let me make it clear: this motion does not specifically call for cash compensation. What it does say is that compensation of some kind, whether it be concession based or in another form, should be explored. There has been certainly a long track record and there are well-documented experiences both from the Gold Coast construction of light rail and likewise the ongoing construction of the Sydney light rail project, with adverse impacts on locally operated businesses, and it is only fair that that thought be in the mind of government as this project continues, should there be a material detrimental effect on existing businesses.

The commercial rates that are paid by business owners in Mitchell are substantial. We are talking upwards of \$30,000 per annum in some cases. This is a significant revenue source for this government; yet once again Canberrans, and businesses particularly in this instance, are asking what exactly it is that they are getting in return. Business owners in Mitchell would simply be pleased if greater attention was paid to the amenity of the area. Simple expectations such as adequate street lighting, footpaths and parking and even street sweeping are not currently up to scratch. The government has failed to ensure that this basic amenity is available in not only the Mitchell business precinct but also others across the city, such as Phillip and Hume.

We have seen this sentiment expressed before. In 2016 the Canberra Liberals highlighted the issues faced by businesses in the Phillip business precinct as a result of an ill-conceived decision by the government and those opposite to implement paid parking in the precinct. The flow-on effect of this decision galvanised traders, as we have seen in Mitchell and again in Hume. The loss of trade and the short and long-term impacts on business are the last consideration of the current government. And simple solutions for that are at hand.

Mitchell, as we have seen with Phillip, is suffering from basic neglect. There is a great deal of neglect in the amenity of the area—simple things that business owners and operators would expect to be managed well in return for the substantial payments they make in rates and charges. Street sweeping, street lighting, adequate footpaths and some simple green space being maintained are all fairly basic expectations but are not being met by the current government. Commercial precincts need to be a place where people want to set up businesses, where they can attract customers and where they

expect to grow their businesses. Currently many of our industrial and commercial precincts are neglected and are not the sorts of places that people would like to often visit.

My motion today calls on the government to address this neglect, work with the traders as to what they need and what their expectations are and, in turn, ensure that they are kept up to date with government decision-making that affects their business and the area in which their business is conducted. It is a simple request that has been overlooked thus far. Constructing a light rail stop at Mitchell, and in the meantime investigating options to compensate traders for impacts that they may be experiencing, is a fair call. The creation of additional parking to meet the amenity of the area is something that should be addressed. Again, they are simple requests that, with consideration, will support one of the territory's main economic drivers—local business.

I urge the government to support my motion. Their support would indicate some goodwill towards local businesses in the Mitchell precinct and businesses across the territory that are being unfairly impacted due to their continually poor decision-making.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.17): I thank Mr Wall for bringing this motion to the Assembly because it allows me and the government to outline the approach that we are taking in the construction of light rail to the provision of city services in the Mitchell precinct. It also allows me to correct some of the facts. I would seriously caution Mr Wall on saying in this place facts which have not been verified. I will return to that at the end of my speech.

It is important to note that the potential for a light rail stop at Mitchell was considered in the early planning stages in 2014. The ACT government facilitated an extensive consultation program, which ran from 30 June to 10 August 2014. It recorded over 16,500 interactions with the local community and stakeholders. Again, I would caution Mr Wall from coming into this place and saying that not once were Mitchell traders contacted about this. Those were his words, Madam Speaker: “not once”. That is not correct. There are multiple publicly available records that go to that point. Mr Wall's comments on this matter in this place and in the media are littered with factual inaccuracies.

Through this consultation, feedback was requested from the public in a variety of ways, including through an online survey, direct mail to homes and businesses along the light rail corridor, social media, public information sessions held in various locations around Canberra and through a temporary information centre in the city centre, open for the duration of the consultation period. Through this process the community provided strong feedback on the proposed options for stop locations along the route.

Regarding stops in Mitchell, over 70 per cent of those completing the survey said they would not use a potential Lysaght Street stop or potential Sandford Street stop at Mitchell. Of those that advised they would use the stop, almost 80 per cent said they would use it only once a week. Over half the respondents indicated that they thought the proposed Well Station Drive was a more appropriate stop than Lysaght Street. At the time and throughout this work it was determined that a light rail stop in Mitchell was not warranted due to low patronage.

Since 31 October 2014, community feedback, media reports and outcomes of the environmental impact statement consultation when the light rail stage 1 business case was released clearly identified that a light rail stop at Mitchell was not warranted as part of stage 1 light rail. However, the government recognises that Mitchell is a growing area and will be positively impacted by the growth of Gungahlin as a whole. Subsequently, a future stop has been provisioned for as part of the construction of light rail, including track alignment and underground communication and utility services. This allows for the development of a Mitchell stop as part of future stages of Canberra's light rail network.

I question whether the mover of this motion is even taking any notice whatsoever to correct many of the statements on this important matter. Indeed, the Sandford Street stop is the only stop provisioned as a future stop under construction right now as part of stage 1. I also take this opportunity to show my support for the newly formed Mitchell Traders Association. I met with some representatives of the association last Friday and I think we had a very productive discussion with them about their local concerns.

I understand that they, like many small businesses, are busy and focused on the day-to-day operations of their business, so they do not always find it as easy to engage as individuals with the government. But the establishment of the Mitchell Traders Association provides an opportunity to work more closely and effectively with government to address strategic business issues in the area, as well as highlighting opportunities to work collaboratively and strengthen the Mitchell trading precinct.

The government will continue to liaise with Mitchell businesses on issues related to light rail. Canberra Metro is also in contact with Mitchell businesses, as is the Canberra Business Chamber's light rail business link program, both of which have offered ongoing support for any additional practical measures during the construction phase. The light rail business link program is delivered by the Canberra Business Chamber and funded by the ACT government to proactively ensure that opportunities for local business are maximised and assist to mitigate impacts to businesses along the light rail corridor through ongoing communications, industry collaboration and business support programs.

A number of meetings have been held between Transport Canberra and City Services, Canberra Metro and the Canberra Business Chamber, initially at the prompting of my office because of correspondence I received from the Mitchell traders group, and in particular Mr Manning, who I congratulate on his efforts to establish this group. He

has done a very impressive job. More recently, a meeting was held on 12 September between TCCS, Canberra Metro and the light rail business link program to plan a coordinated approach to engaging with Mitchell traders. A range of actions for each of the three organisations is currently being developed. This includes planned social media promotion of Mitchell businesses, opportunities for individual business support and precinct activation through the light rail business link program, and frequent and ongoing liaison with the Mitchell traders group and TCCS.

To ensure high quality public transport access in the Mitchell area, the government will ensure continuation of a connected bus service. It is important to note that light rail should not be considered as an alternative to buses; rather, it is an addition as part of an expanded and integrated public transport system. Buses and light rail will be integrated to ensure one fare, one ticket and one timetabling system. Consultation on the integrated public transport network will commence later this year and the Mitchell Traders Association will be an important stakeholder in developing the network through the area. Currently, Mitchell is serviced by four bus routes during the week. Two of these run through Mitchell and two, including the high frequency red rapid, run along Flemington Road.

In terms of patronage, this year has seen a daily total average of 96 passenger movements, including boardings and alightings, on weekdays along Flemington Road at Mitchell. The daily average for weekend total passenger movement is 21. These averages are lower in comparison to the passenger movements at Well Station Drive towards Gungahlin. The daily average for a weekday is 255 and 93 over the weekend, well over double.

Transport Canberra is currently developing bus services for integration with light rail stage 1, but with light rail stage 1 not currently having a stop at Sandford Street, service planners are ensuring that there continues to be high quality public transport access in the area through a connected bus service. Transport Canberra will introduce a new bus network on 7 October this year. The network change is the first in a series of improvements towards the government's objective of developing an integrated public transport system in the nation's capital. The new network will demonstrate our commitment to improving the network as we move to evolve the city.

To further support Mitchell business during the construction phase of light rail stage 1, Transport Canberra and City Services and Canberra Metro are considering measures to reduce the potential impacts. One measure could include additional signage to assist in advising passing traffic that businesses remain open and can still be accessed, in particular off the service road that fronts Flemington Road.

In relation to the street sweeping schedule for Mitchell, I have asked Transport Canberra and City Services to investigate street sweeping arrangements. Arrangements for the regular sweeping of the industrial areas of Hume, Fyshwick and Mitchell have been separated from the residential suburb and major road sweeping schedules that are published on the TCCS website. Sweeping of industrial areas is generally undertaken out of business hours due to the nature of the areas and levels of street parking.

The next review of the published street sweeping schedule, following work currently underway to refine and optimise the program, will consolidate all sweeping operations, including the Mitchell precinct. TCCS will continue to look at efficient ways to improve the street sweeping program. The optimisation project includes investigating whether to increase the number of sweeps in leafier suburbs and is due to be implemented early next year. It will include Mitchell.

Community path upkeep is important to ensure that walking around our suburbs is both easy and safe. TCCS has a planned inspection program for the community path network within the ACT, which includes Mitchell. Areas are prioritised for inspection based on usage and pedestrian mix. In addition to planned inspections, all location inquiries raised through Access Canberra and fix my street are inspected. Once reported, they are assessed as soon as possible. Urgent safety repairs are made within seven working days and, for efficiency, less urgent issues are scheduled in larger contracts. TCCS are currently reviewing the path inspection and maintenance strategy to improve the safety and sustainability of the network.

In relation to the opposition's request for increased maintenance of streetlights, as they are aware, the ACT government owns more than 78,000 streetlights, located on footpaths, arterial roads and in various public parks and other open spaces around the ACT. Public lighting is the ACT government's highest use of electricity and produces 18 per cent of the government's greenhouse gas emissions. As members opposite are also aware, the ACT government has approached the market for a complete management solution for our streetlights, which will deliver energy efficiency upgrades as well as a platform for future smart city options. Mitchell, along with other suburbs of Canberra, will benefit from this new contract, expected to be announced later this year.

This will see a significant proportion of Canberra's streetlight network upgraded to LED, subsequently increasing electrical safety and improving energy efficiency. TCCS has implemented an expanded electrical safety inspection program. The expanded program has commenced in high pedestrian zones, including town centres and group centres. Mitchell will be inspected later on this month.

Madam Speaker, given that the mover of this motion has talked throughout my entire speech, I invite him to either listen to the response or perhaps take the discussion outside the chamber. It is very difficult to give a speech when the mover of the motion is paying absolutely no attention whatsoever.

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, do not interject—

**Mr Wall:** Madam Speaker, is it a point of order?

**Mr Coe:** Madam Speaker, is this a point of order? This just seems like a debating point.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think—

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am finding it difficult to give a speech when there is a constant conversation going on not far away from me. Not only that, I will look forward to telling the Mitchell traders that Mr Wall moved this motion and then actually failed to engage in any debate whatsoever.

**Mr Coe:** We are not allowed to engage in the debate while you are talking.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order! The point of order is about distraction. Whilst it is not interjecting, you would be surprised how the noise of conversations carries. I am not going to ask that we all sit in silence, but if there is an ongoing conversation think about taking it outside or just be mindful of how the noise carries across the chamber. That is what I ask.

**Ms Cheyne:** Do you really care about your own topic?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** That is a separate matter, Ms Cheyne. Thank you. Minister, please continue.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In relation to the opposition's request for the construction of a new car park in Mitchell, I would say that constructing new car parks should not be the first response, nor is it always the best response to a perceived shortage of parking spaces in any particular location. It can tend to demonstrate a short-sighted and reactive response to an issue. I do believe that the initial effort from a responsible government should be focused on exhausting the capacity of the existing infrastructure and encouraging a shift to other transport modes, including active travel.

In saying that, I acknowledge that there is not necessarily an oversupply of all-day parking spaces in the Mitchell area. But I am aware of available all-day parking spaces in the centre of the existing courts in Mitchell. These spaces are all located within a reasonably short walk from Flemington Road and the eastern side of Mitchell. In addition to this, I am confident that there would be other under-utilised kerb space where a change in parking controls to support a growth in the workforce could be achieved with minimal investment. This would be, I think, a far more responsible way to respond to calls for increased parking availability rather than heavily investing in additional new car parks.

Madam Speaker, I can see great outcomes ahead for the businesses of Mitchell from the relationship that will be formed over the coming months with the new traders organisation. I look forward to seeing the results of these for the traders themselves. For those who may not be able to commit time to engage with a group such as the traders association, we also have many ways in which the community and businesses can request improvements to the public realm.

As individuals, this can be done, of course, through Access Canberra fix my street, which will always result in an officer from city services meeting to discuss and investigate opportunities to improve the quality and amenity of the public space affecting these people. But I acknowledge, and again congratulate, the Mitchell traders for forming a group so that their voices as a whole can be heard within government and also the Canberra Business Chamber, which I know has valued engaging with them.

I just repeat my caution to Mr Wall about his comments earlier in this debate that “not once”—his words—was there an opportunity for Mitchell traders to participate in the consultation. That is patently not the case. There was extensive consultation. I would, of course, note that—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, I remind you that you need to move your amendment.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit paragraphs (1) and (2), substitute:

- “(1) the important contribution that businesses in Mitchell make to the ACT economy;
- (2) that Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) and Minister for Transport and City Services has met with representatives of the Mitchell Traders Group;
- (3) the ACT Government has conducted extensive consultation on planning for light rail, especially since 2011, as part of an integrated transport network for Canberra;
- (4) that the Canberra Liberals have persistently and extensively opposed the introduction of light rail services for Canberra;
- (5) as part of the extensive consultation for Light Rail Stage 1 from Gungahlin to the City, a number of potential stops were considered, with 13 stops agreed and announced in late 2014 for consideration in the business case, subsequent procurement and the construction now underway. A stop at Sandford Street, Mitchell was not one of these 13 stops;
- (6) the ACT Government recognises, however, that Mitchell is a growing area and will be positively impacted by the growth of Gungahlin and Canberra’s northside and has committed to build a light rail stop in Mitchell in the future;
- (7) that provisioning for a future stop at Sandford Street, Mitchell was included in the procurement and current construction;

- (8) the ACT Government will prioritise operationalising the Sandford Street stop at the earliest opportunity, but that this is unlikely before services begin in late 2018;
- (9) that Mitchell will continue to be serviced by Transport Canberra buses to ensure public transport services to this important business precinct of Canberra now, as well as following the introduction of light rail services;
- (10) the Minister for Transport and City Services has undertaken to follow-up on a range of issues raised by the Mitchell Traders Group, including:
  - (a) directing TCCS, Canberra Metro and the Light Rail Business Link program run by the Canberra Business Chamber to work with Mitchell traders on any additional practical measures which might support them during the construction phase of light rail;
  - (b) investigating opportunities to improve the delivery of city services in Mitchell; and
  - (c) considering an opportunity to partner with Mitchell businesses to promote an event in the Mitchell district; and
- (11) calls on the ACT Government to continue to consult with businesses in Mitchell on the delivery of city services and minor capital works in Mitchell, including improvements to urban services such as footpaths and streetlight maintenance.”.

As noted in my amendment, there was an extensive opportunity for consultation during that period. I think the Canberra Liberals at some point need to take some responsibility in their role in the public debate around light rail. Extensively and persistently, they were nowhere requesting this in 2013, 2014 and 2015—nor, indeed, in 2016. I also caution Mr Wall about comments he made on the radio this morning that tens of thousands of people work in Mitchell. Also, I do not believe that there is a childcare centre operating in Mitchell, which he spoke about. I also caution him to understand the nature of the actual commercial agreement which underpins this very important infrastructure project for Canberra.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (10.32): The Greens will be supporting the government’s amendment. I first want to talk about the community consultation. In 2014 I was living in Downer. I point out that I am not living in Downer anymore; I am living in Phillip, in the electorate of Murrumbidgee. But in 2014 I was a happy resident in Downer and a member of the Downer Community Association. Without getting into anyone’s particular views, I can fairly say that the Downer Community Association was not all of one mind about light rail. However, we were very aware that it was happening, and we worked out that there were no planned light rail stops anywhere in Downer, which, as you can appreciate, we thought was a significant issue. In fact, at that stage, of course, there was a planned stop in Mitchell.

So we put in a submission saying, as you can imagine, that Downer is an important place full of people who want public transport and, "Please, we want a stop too." It was obviously longer than that, but that was the basic premise. I am really surprised. The traders of Mitchell must have known it was happening; they simply could not have not known it was happening. Possibly part of the message from this is that there is always a possibility that the government will do what they say they are going to do; you cannot just assume they will not. That appears to be effectively what Mr Wall is saying—that the traders assumed it was not going to happen so they did not bother engaging.

I have been involved one way or the other with community action for a very long time. It is not always worthwhile, but if you want changes you have to at least be part of the conversation, and that is the biggest message from this particular motion. The government called for feedback, and it certainly got a lot of it. I am sure it got a lot of it in different directions. But if the Mitchell traders chose not to say that they wanted anything then it is fairly easy to understand why the government figured, "Well, if they do not want a stop and they're the ones who are there, why would we do a stop?" You have to have considerable sympathy for the decisions that were made.

Looking a bit more broadly, we have to be fairly cautious about the level of enthusiasm for stops. The problem we have is that every stop means the journey will be longer. Generally speaking, with the exception of the Mitchell traders, when you ask people whether they want a stop, of course they say, "Yes, I would like a stop about 50 metres from my place." I would have thought everybody would like that, and generally community consultation comes to that sort of result.

That was one of the big things in stage 1—it was explicitly said as part of the community consultation, "We have too many stops on this line and we are going to remove some," which is one of the things which made Downer particularly concerned because we were not even there the first time. We are very pleased that the government listened to community consultation and that there is a stop in Downer. One of the things we will have to look at in terms of light rail going forward is ensuring that there is the potential for stops to be bypassed in some cases where they may be less popular stops so that the timing works well. This is something, obviously, for future considerations.

Mr Wall's motion talks about building a light rail stop and more parking. I recognise the need for park and ride in some places, so the idea of a rail stop and more parking is not absolutely 100 per cent silly. But in this instance I must admit that I cannot see the point of it. There is, in fact, park and ride at EPIC, which is not that far away. If people are driving any distance, they would be able to go from Mitchell to EPIC where there is, as we all know, abundant parking during the week because EPIC needs that space for the wonderful events that happen there at the weekend. That would seem to be one of the less obvious options as to what should happen. I agree with the minister's comments about how we need to explore other options. Whatever transport options we have in Canberra, we have to reduce our dependence on private petrol-burning cars for many, many reasons: congestion, fossil fuels and equity, as they are very expensive things to run.

Looking at the city services part of it, I have some sympathy for areas that feel they are inadequately serviced, and I am pleased, of course, that the government is working with the Mitchell businesses. But as a member for Murrumbidgee I would like to put in a plug for the Phillip traders. I know Mr Wall is very well aware of their situation. That organisation started around a year ago as a result of planned changes in parking. It is still going, which is great. I have attended quite a number of their meetings, but I point out to the government that the Phillip traders are in a very similar situation with parking issues and poor public transport, so I have to agree with Mr Wall's concerns there.

That brings me to the next point: everybody would like better than what we have at present. There is limited funding to go around, and that is why my last item of private members' business was about participatory budgeting, particularly for city services. We spend a lot of time in this place talking about how area X would like better footpaths, better lighting, better roads, better parks, better playgrounds—you name it—better whatever. There is no doubt that there is a need virtually everywhere in Canberra for better city services. But there is also, as Mr Wall again pointed out, a need for the rates bill not to be too high.

We have to prioritise how we spend our money on city services, and that is why participatory budgeting is important as another way to try to do this. I really do not think debates in the Assembly about individual footpaths are the way to go. Although I am quite happy to entertain more debates about footpaths versus roads or whatever, debating individual footpaths is really not the way to go. Having said that, when doorknocking last year and this year, I found that footpath maintenance seemed to be one of the highest things on the list of the constituents of Murrumbidgee, and that is one of the reasons the parliamentary agreement has more funds for footpath maintenance.

I am really amazed that we have two private members' motions from the Liberal Party about light rail. I am really pleased to see the increased emphasis on sustainable transport options for Canberra. While we may agree or disagree about particular parts, it is very important that this place looks towards the future. One of the fundamental things the ACT government must provide is a transport system that works for Canberrans into the future. I thank Mr Wall for this motion, misguided in some instances though I think it is. As I said earlier, the Greens will be supporting Minister Fitzharris's amendments.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.41): I support Mr Wall's motion and in doing so I support the hundreds of small businesses that operate in Mitchell and make a significant contribution to our community. During Ms Fitzharris's speech Mr Wall and I were chatting about the many issues we had with what she was saying. There were many inconsistencies and also inconsistencies in what Ms Le Couteur said as well. In contrast to what Ms Le Couteur thought was meant by (2)(c) with regard to additional all-day parking in Mitchell, it is not actually about park and ride in this instance; there would be no point in building additional car parking in Mitchell if there is no stop there.

The point of the car parking is that there is not enough all-day parking provided, especially on that Flemington Road end of Mitchell. Because of that cars are parked up and down the eastern side of Mitchell, which has, in effect, taken away the short-stay parking throughout that part of Mitchell. That means that many of the businesses that depend on people being able to zip in and zip out simply do not have that on offer to their clients. And when you take away the convenience of access, Mitchell is quite isolated. The whole point of having precincts such as Mitchell and Hume is that there is space and relatively good vehicle access. Once you take away that good vehicle access, one of their key advantages is taken away.

It is interesting that Ms Le Couteur should also talk about a stop in Mitchell slowing down the travel time. It would only slow down the travel time if there was somebody there who wanted to get on or someone who wanted to get off. If there was no demand it would not affect travel time at all; the tram would go straight on through the stop. To say that it would slow down the travel time is an admission that people want to get on and people want to get off at Mitchell. It would suggest that there is a demand if it is going to slow down the travel time.

In addition, Ms Le Couteur also said that the Mitchell traders should have, in effect, lobbied harder when the Downer residents were lobbying. But, as she pointed out herself, the initial plans had a stop in place for Mitchell, so there was no need for them to form a lobbying entity. You can rest assured that if there was a Swinden Street stop from the very beginning, Downer would not have fought hard to keep their stop; it would have just been a given. But the fact that there was a Lysaght Street stop in those original maps put out by the government gave false hope and false comfort to the traders of Mitchell.

Of course, many traders in Mitchell first heard they were not getting a tram stop a matter of weeks ago, when they were doorknocked by the Mitchell traders. They just assumed that having a depot in Mitchell a few hundred metres away and having the main arterial road that the tram is travelling down would be an obvious location for a tram stop—and it is. It is an obvious location for a tram stop. The thing about this light rail system is that there are no key destinations and not many key workplaces throughout the route. Mitchell is perhaps the only one between Dickson and Gungahlin where there are a significant number of workers. Many people would have simply worked on the assumption that it makes sense that there would be a tram stop in Mitchell, just as there are currently bus stops in Mitchell.

It is interesting that Ms Fitzharris said we should not build more parking because we should be encouraging active travel. We are not building a tram stop. You are hardly encouraging active travel if you are not building a tram stop. It is absolutely absurd that you would make this case that we should use public transport but you are not going to provide a public transport stop. This is the inconsistency of the government. Then, of course, they say, “Don’t worry; buses are going to remain.” What are the plans for buses there? At the moment you can get a single bus from Gungahlin through Mitchell on to the city, and the 200 route already goes down Flemington Road, the same journey as the tram. They currently have the frequent red rapid and, in

effect, a more suburban route service going through Mitchell. The red rapid disappears and there is no tram stop, so they are worse off without that rapid service. There is no doubt about that.

I think it is reasonable for the traders of Mitchell who are paying huge amounts through rates, payroll tax and other fees and charges, to get reasonable access. Why is it that the government still cannot say what the public transport plan is in this integrated world that they keep talking about? They have known that this was going to be the tram route for years now. What is actually going to be the bus plan? Either they know about it and they are not telling us or there has been a complete lack of planning for how light rail is actually going to integrate with buses.

Are we going to have a little shuttle service running around Mitchell, going to Well Station Drive or going to EPIC? Is that how it is going to operate? Is there going to be a loop service going from Gungahlin through Franklin and then on to Mitchell? Who knows? There is no clarity in this space. Businesses operate on certainty and on confidence, and it is reasonable that they would want to know what the parking arrangements are going to be and what the public transport arrangements are going to be. They are going to be worse off when you take out the red rapid stop.

Ms Le Couteur also mentioned the fact that the Assembly is not the place to talk about individual street paths or footpaths. We have a representative model here; we have an electorate model here. We are not large, and that was made quite evident by the fact that Ms Le Couteur stressed that she lived in her own electorate, that she lived in Phillip. That is reinforcing the parochial nature of this place and the fact that we do represent areas. The whole point of that representative model by way of electorates is that we have the local knowledge or we have the portfolio knowledge to stand up for things we are specialising in. That is exactly what Mr Wall is doing today—standing up for his portfolio of small business, of which there are several hundred in Mitchell that are getting a raw deal from this government, despite ever-increasing rates, fees, charges, taxes and all the other ways the ACT government fleeces them.

At the end of the day, the traders of Mitchell do not have an unreasonable request. They currently have a rapid bus service. They are going to have a tram track running out the front. Can they build a tram stop there? It seems pretty reasonable. According to the information we have, it looks like the cost is in the vicinity of \$1 million. That is certainly what the business case says. If the business case is wrong so be it. If the government wants to clarify what the cost is, that would be useful. But it is only going to slow down the journey if people actually use it, because otherwise it will keep on going straight through.

I believe there is a good case to be made for a tram stop in Mitchell and I believe there is a good case for it to be included on the street sweeping schedule. Why is Mitchell not included on the street sweeping schedule? Why is there not a proper service for the people that are paying so much to this government and creating so many opportunities and creating so much enterprise in this city? I take my hat off to the businesses in Canberra but particularly those in Mitchell and the Gungahlin town centre that are struggling as a result of this construction process. I only hope that it is worth it.

*Ms Cheyne interjecting—*

It is one thing to do the pain; it is another to not get the gain. Despite Ms Cheyne's interjections—and having a go at us about interjecting—I very much hope that she too would stick up for small business in Canberra and advocate for some certainty and some confidence for these people in return for the risks and opportunities they create.

**MR MILLIGAN** (Yerrabi) (10.51): I thank Mr Wall for bringing forward this important motion highlighting the impact of light rail on the businesses in Mitchell. I want to add that it is affecting not just businesses in Mitchell but also many areas of Gungahlin. I have recently been talking to members of the business community in the Gungahlin town centre. The place sure is a mess, and it is affecting business. The problem, of course, is that when there is a mess, people simply do not want to shop in the Gungahlin town centre. It is unattractive, dirty and noisy, and the lack of access is prohibitive.

The business owners commented that they have had to keep the doors closed at all times, in effect, looking as though they are not open for business, but not because of the weather—though at the time of the year you could be excused for thinking that—but because of the dirt and dust. Debris from the construction works continues to make its way into their shops, and there appears to be no end in sight. This will, no doubt, get worse before it gets better as the dry weather increases. Others commented about the noise. One business owner told me that there are days when the noise from the machinery does not stop. There is no doubt that noise has been a significant problem right along the route of the tram works for businesses and residents.

A few shop owners in Gungahlin Place were told the additional works would take only a matter of six weeks, but that was some months ago now. The fencing around the works has made it difficult to access the Gungahlin village and shops, and it has put people off making the effort. This brings me to perhaps the most significant problem aside from the dust, dirt, noise and lack of access—the cost of the works to businesses and the community. Some businesses have told me there has been a significant drop in trade, with some recording up to a 30 per cent drop in turnover. One shop commented that they have had to lay off full-time staff because they can no longer afford to keep them as a result of the drop-off in trade.

I agree with Mr Wall and call on the government to communicate and consult with the community. It is time to let them know what is happening and how long these disruptions will continue. But the government should also be exploring with them what compensation can be offered to those businesses severely impacted by the construction of the light rail, or all we will end up with is a series of empty shopfronts in what was once an expanding area of the town.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (10.54): The government has been very keen to point out that the Liberals have not been big supporters of this project, and that is true. Up to the lead-up to last year's election we on this side of the chamber believed there were higher priority and better infrastructure investments that the territory could be making.

But Canberrans had the opportunity to have their say at the ballot box last year. We are still on this side of the chamber; therefore we accept that stage 1 of the light rail is going ahead. The policy position for us on this side of the chamber now is to ensure that light rail works for as many Canberrans as possible, given the substantial investment that all ratepayers in this territory are making to build just a small portion of the light rail network.

That includes making sure that the people who live and, more importantly, work along that corridor can utilise that investment in their daily commute. The omission of a stop in Mitchell is a huge failing in the project's ability to service the most number of Canberrans possible. The inclusion of a stop was originally under consideration but then was removed. Businesses are only now discovering that the stop they expected to be there will not be there. Any sensible person that looked at a major employment hub and major public transport infrastructure would expect there to be a stop in that precinct, and it seems irrational that there will not be. The minister continues to give excuses at best as to why the government is not listening to the interests of the traders and is arguing over the semantics.

The opposition will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the minister as it fails on one of the key points my motion brought forward—that is, to consider some form of concession or compensation for the businesses along the light rail corridor that have been adversely affected. Everyone accepts that whilst construction is going ahead there will be some inconvenience in our daily commute and in getting around town. That is reasonable to expect. But I really have an issue when government has the arrogance to say, “If we bankrupt your business as a result of our capital works and infrastructure development, that's your problem.”

I believe something more needs to be done in that space to recognise that people's livelihoods are being affected by this project. There should be some consideration, some concession, from government to say, “We are in this with you as a business. We want to see you survive post the construction of this project. What can we do to help?” But that has been absent from the government's policy and planning thus far. Madam Speaker, we will continue to engage with businesses across Canberra—be they in Mitchell, Phillip, Hume, Fyshwick, Belconnen, Tuggeranong or any other part of the city where they operate—to make sure that their interests are being represented adequately in this Assembly.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12

Noes 9

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

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## **Government—inclusiveness policies**

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (11.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that the ACT Government is committed to building an inclusive and welcoming city for all Canberrans and recognises that:
  - (a) Canberra is a proudly diverse community, boasting a rich collection of people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, belief systems, sexual orientations and social and economic demographics; and
  - (b) the whole ACT community is stronger when every person has a sense of belonging, feels supported and is able to contribute to their full capacity;
- (2) reaffirms its commitment to creating a city of opportunity for all Canberrans and notes the significant funds dedicated to supporting the health, wellbeing and inclusion of all Canberrans in the 2017-2018 Budget, including:
  - (a) the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning (LGBTIQ) community;
  - (b) women;
  - (c) refugees;
  - (d) the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;
  - (e) Canberrans with a disability;
  - (f) culturally and linguistically diverse people;
  - (g) vulnerable children, women and older Canberrans;
  - (h) carers;
  - (i) people in our community who are facing disadvantage; and
  - (j) people who are finding their way back from the justice system;
- (3) recognises that the ACT Government is already taking practical steps to promote an inclusive and supportive community, including by:
  - (a) providing additional funding to A Gender Agenda to build capability and increase support to the gender-diverse community;

- (b) funding Safe Schools to encourage all young people to learn about gender diversity and to support young people in the LGBTIQ community;
  - (c) passing legislation to establish Australia's first Reconciliation Day public holiday;
  - (d) continued funding for Justice Reinvestment programs to deliver a family-focused approach to reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system;
  - (e) encouraging and investing in schools that provide great opportunities for all children to learn regardless of their background or circumstances;
  - (f) delivering a mental health package with a special focus on young people and new mothers, as well as investing in a range of services and programs to improve the mental health of Canberrans and reduce the incidences of suicide in our community;
  - (g) hosting over 35 workshops involving hundreds of people, and reaching thousands of Canberrans, as part of the development of the ACT Housing Strategy in the lead up to the ACT Housing and Homelessness Summit in October 2017;
  - (h) promoting women in sport with specific funding to increase participating of young women, including working towards more equal funding for elite teams and representation on sporting boards tied to triennial funding agreements; a new women in sport on-line portal to be established; and infrastructure funding to make community sporting facilities more accessible for women and girls;
  - (i) encouraging inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals through sporting events, festivals and an increase in access to services in languages other than English;
  - (j) declaring the ACT a Refugee Welcome Zone and supporting refugees and asylum seekers to improve their English language skills through expanding English language programs, and to enter the workforce with the assistance of a job brokerage service;
  - (k) supporting programs that improve outcomes for offenders transitioning back into the community and reduce rates of recidivism; and
  - (l) kicking off a deliberative democracy process to improve support for ACT carers; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Government to sustain its focus on inclusion and to continue delivering new programs and initiatives that recognise, respect and support our diverse community.

“A society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. A society based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and

freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.” That is how UNESCO defines social inclusion. It sounds good, doesn’t it? Social exclusion, on the other hand, is unsurprisingly bleak. It has been defined as restricted access to opportunities and limits put on someone’s ability to capitalise on those opportunities. In a nutshell, “I will give you fewer opportunities and, as for the few crumbs that do fall your way, good luck making the most of them, because you probably don’t have access to the same resources, skills, networks or experiences as other people, anyway.”

It sounds brutal, but this is the reality for individuals and groups in our society who experience social exclusion. I was going to say “individuals and groups in our society who are on the wrong side of social exclusion”, but I realised that there is no “right” and “wrong” when it comes to social exclusion. Everyone suffers. Our society as a whole stagnates, becomes less happy and, quite frankly, less interesting when we exclude individuals or groups on the basis of their identity. That is why the ACT government stands on a firm platform of social inclusion.

We are lucky to live in a proudly diverse community. As we heard from Minister Rattenbury in the last sitting, 32 per cent of our population was born overseas, and over 170 languages are spoken across Canberra. 1.6 per cent of our population is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 50 per cent of us are women, and 15.8 per cent of Canberrans report living with a disability. Most importantly, 100 per cent of us are doing our best to get by and live a meaningful life.

The ACT government is working hard to make sure everyone has the opportunity to do just that. It is our mission to ensure that no-one in Canberra is barred from fully participating in our society due to their gender, culture, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or social or economic disadvantage. Importantly, we are determined to not just pay lip service to the cause.

Change takes sustained, positive action, and that is exactly what the ACT government is delivering. It was made clear in the recent budget that, when it comes to social inclusion, the ACT government is putting its money where its mouth is. We are delivering services, programs, events and support for individuals and groups who face barriers to full and free social participation. This includes the LGBTIQ community, women, refugees, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, Canberrans with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse people, vulnerable children, women and older Canberrans, carers, people who are facing a disadvantage, and people who are finding their way back from the justice system.

As you can see, Madam Assistant Speaker, it is a long list. But each of these groups knows how it feels to be marginalised or to struggle to get ahead in the competitive realms of education, work or sport when they do not have access to the resources they need. The ACT government is working hard to help Canberrans to get in, get ahead or get back on their feet, because we want to create a city of opportunity for all Canberrans.

The practical steps this government has already taken to promote a more inclusive Canberra are extensive. For every group that I mentioned, we have started the rollout of new programs, resources and events to provide support where it is needed and to promote an inclusive community. I have listed some of these initiatives in the motion before the Assembly today. I am proud to say that there are too many for me to mention now, and I trust that my colleagues will help me in providing particulars for the many different initiatives that are underway across Canberra. For my part, I would like to focus on how gender and sexual orientation can lead to social exclusion and what the ACT government is doing to bring an end to this senseless discrimination and support those who are made to suffer because of it.

Our LGBTIQ comrades are at particular risk of social exclusion due to their gender identity and sexual orientation. A 2013 report from beyondblue found that the mental health of the LGBTIQ community is among the poorest in Australia. They are shockingly over-represented in statistics for major depressive episodes, levels of psychological distress, anxiety disorders and generally poor mental health. Young LGBTIQ people in particular are disproportionately affected by mental health issues. Tragically, our LGBTIQ friends and family are 14 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. And it breaks my heart that up to 50 per cent of trans people have actually attempted suicide at least once in their lives.

It is easy to get lost in the statistics or get caught up in irrelevant moral debates about sexual orientation and lose sight of the fact that these are our brothers, our sisters, our mums and dads, our daughters and our sons. They are living under the heavy weight of discrimination, isolation, mental health issues, and, much too frequently, they are taking their own lives. Let us be clear: it is not the state of being LGBTIQ itself that is causing these issues. It is the actions and the words of those who undermine, disrespect, criticise and condemn the LGBTIQ community who create this pain.

The ACT government will not stand by and watch our LGBTIQ friends suffer. We will step up, shout out and link arms to build the most welcoming city in Australia for LGBTIQ people. The ACT government has established the office for LGBTIQ affairs in the Chief Minister's portfolio to focus on the specific needs of the LGBTIQ community. The office will receive nearly \$1.4 million over four years to help counter the scourge of discrimination against LGBTIQ people. The office will promote inclusive events and work across government to ensure that services meet the needs of LGBTIQ people in the community. For the young Canberra woman who might be starting to wonder about her sexuality and is nervous about whether she will be accepted, being able to access services that meet her needs, and knowing that she is welcome in her city, can make a world of difference.

We have also committed \$500,000 to provide additional support to A Gender Agenda to support the intersex, transgender and gender diverse community's access to services and to address barriers to participation in the broader community. A Gender Agenda is a community organisation working towards a world where intersex, transgender and gender diverse people live without fear or discrimination. They are actively engaged in the Canberra community, providing support, education and

advocacy services to LGBTIQ people, their friends and their families. Their initiatives include community events, discussion groups, access to a gender library, law reform activities, and training and community education.

We have also ensured that safe schools will continue to be funded in the ACT. Young LGBTIQ people are at considerably higher risk of suffering from poor mental health than non-LGBTIQ youth. We are talking about differences of more than 30 per cent in the presentation of high or very high levels of psychological distress. It is incumbent on us as the government to help all young people to understand gender diversity and to create a safe environment for young people to figure out their sexuality.

The costs of social exclusion of the LGBTIQ community are more than any individual or group should ever have to bear. The ACT government is absolutely committed to supporting our LGBTIQ friends and creating a community that accepts and welcomes them. In the words of Gloria Carter, Jay-Z's mum, who came out to the world in his recent track *Smile*:

Living in the shadow, can you imagine what kind of life it is to live? ... Life is short, and it's time to be free. Love who you love, because life isn't guaranteed.

We will keep working together until gender and sexual orientation are non-issues, until LGBTIQ people feel safe, supported and free in our community. Our support for the LGBTIQ community is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the social inclusion initiatives of this government, but due to time constraints I will leave it to my colleagues to elaborate on other inclusion measures that are underway. One thing is very clear: the ACT government is utterly committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming city for all Canberrans, and we are taking practical steps to achieve just that. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (11.12): I am very pleased to stand in support of this motion today and I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing it forth. I believe, and I think everyone here believes, that it is important that we maintain a focus on social inclusion. The government provides programs and initiatives that not only recognise but respect, celebrate and support our community and also work to minimise the exclusion that specific groups in our community face. We need to understand that a socially inclusive society is one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected and their basic needs are met so that they can live in dignity. Poverty often leads to social exclusion, but it is not the only thing preventing people from participating fully in economic, social and political life in the society in which they live.

Social inclusion is about connectedness and participation. However, in order to understand how to promote such connectedness and participation, it is important to understand the barriers and obstacles to participation so that they can be removed or reduced. As I have said to many people, I originally studied economics at university because it was very obvious to me that financial issues, including poverty, were a major barrier to social justice, compassion and equality. Clearly, poverty is one of the issues, but it is not the only issue, and I am going to talk about some of the other issues here today.

Right now, the LGBTIQ community is one of the areas I feel I must talk about. That community is at the centre of conversations in many Australian lounge rooms. It is vitally important that those people all feel supported, accepted and able to participate in the community without fear of discrimination. This is why I support the efforts of the ACT government to demonstrate the community's support through the period of the postal survey. Additional funds for counselling and support for this group are well warranted. We have seen this week a spike in demand for support services from the group. ReachOut, an organisation offering online support for young people and their families across a broad spectrum of health needs, has experienced a 20 per cent increase in people accessing LGBTIQ support services, as have other support services such as QLife.

Research on LGBTIQ health generally in Australia has revealed higher than average rates of substance abuse and poorer mental health, especially depression, anxiety and suicide, with discrimination against LGBTIQ people being a key factor. However, it is worth noting that LGBTIQ people are over-represented in many areas of social exclusion, not just on mental health issues. Current discrimination and stigma can extend to less access to education and employment, and harassment and violence on public transport and in the street. There is emerging evidence that they are over-represented in the homeless population.

The biggest barrier to accessing services and participating in the community for this population group is discrimination, or the quite justified fear of it. This is why the Greens are publicly supporting the yes campaign in the ACT and publicly supporting the ACT government in its support. It has been consistent with our policy over many, many years.

I will now move to refugees. The Greens have been known for their support for refugees and asylum seekers. We are the only consistent voice at the national level speaking out against offshore detention. I was particularly proud when, in the last sitting period, Minister Rattenbury's motion to write to the federal government requesting that it immediately remove all refugees and asylum seekers from Manus Island and Nauru and bring all refugees and asylum seekers to Australia to be resettled in Australia's 148 refugee welcome zones, including Canberra, was supported.

We are the only state or territory government to support such a motion. We can hope that the other jurisdictions follow suit, as this appalling treatment of our fellow human beings—asylum seekers—has to stop. The barriers to participation for this group are profound, if they can even get to the country. For those who have been accepted as humanitarian entrants, we must strive to provide them with the supports they need to be able to participate. The expansion of the English language program and the job brokerage services are ways to do that.

I have talked about the disadvantages faced by women on numerous occasions in this chamber already. We know about the gender pay gap. We know that single-parent households are more likely to be headed by women. We know that women have lower rates of full-time work and lower retirement savings. We know that older single women are emerging as being at a high risk of experiencing homelessness.

Efforts to support the health, wellbeing and inclusion of women are necessary and vital. This includes looking at specific policy issues through a gender lens so that we can truly see how they impact on women, men and the trans community. Sometimes the impact is the same, but most often the impact is different if we take the time to examine how it could be different. This extends not only to dedicated employment services, for example, or promoting opportunities for women in sport but to seeking out and including women in consultation, in program development and in planning. When women participate more, they bring unique and helpful perspectives to the issue under discussion. We are not just losing the voice of someone who would say the same things as everyone else in conversation if we do not listen to women or to the trans community; we are losing the voice of a different viewpoint.

Of course, this applies across all areas of marginalisation. There are many people in our community who fit into more than one of the groups listed in Ms Cheyne's motion. That is my point: there is the issue of intersecting or multiple disadvantages. You might be gay, a woman, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; you could be a person with a disability who is from a migrant or refugee background. You could be a single mother. You could be escaping from violence, with mental health issues, including being suicidal. You might be a carer with a disability. You might be a carer looking after a child with disability, which is, I am afraid, all too common an experience. You might be working insecure shifts. You might be in the hospitality industry and recently had your penalty rates reduced. For these or many other reasons, you might be at a significant financial disadvantage compared to the average Canberran.

I can only emphasise that it is important to examine crossover linkages between government strategies, programs and initiatives to ensure that they are accessible to all. This is how we promote social inclusion. The ACT Greens have always had a focus on social inclusion. Two of the basic values that all members subscribe to are grassroots democracy and social justice. Grassroots democracy is about inclusion. It is about hearing the voices of everyday people to inform our policy. Social justice is about the equal distribution of opportunities and resources.

This is why we have negotiated to include a number of items in the parliamentary agreement, including but not limited to developing a carers strategy; establishing the office of mental health; reducing gambling harm through mandatory pre-commitment and other initiatives; creating a new policy unit for disability; establishing a multicultural advisory board; increasing community access to government facilities; establishing a drug and alcohol court; funding dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and language programs; and developing an affordable housing strategy. All of these items in the parliamentary agreement are designed to promote community cohesiveness, reduce social exclusion and ensure equal access to services for marginalised and disadvantaged Canberrans.

The Greens will continue to put the community first during this Ninth Assembly, and we will continue to speak up against racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism and ageism. We will continue to advocate for environmental, social and community programs and infrastructure for the people in our city who risk falling behind or being invisible because they cannot equitably participate in the life of our community. Madam Assistant Speaker, I support this motion.

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (11.21): I move:

In paragraph (4), omit all words after “calls on the ACT Government to”, substitute:

- “(a) improve its focus on inclusion and to continue delivering new programs and initiatives that recognise, respect and support our diverse community; and
- (b) discontinue its systematic exclusion of community groups that disagree with government policy, such as the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club, Clubs ACT, victims of dog attacks, small businesses and the increasing number of Canberrans struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living.”.

“Inclusion” is a fascinating word, isn’t it? I think inclusion means everybody. I applaud the government’s attempts to include so many groups in the mix of what is, as Ms Cheyne described it, one of the strongest communities in the nation. In the context of the current national debate on same-sex marriage, it is important that we all do whatever we can to support those who are experiencing vilification, who are in some way, shape or form being harmed by the way that this debate is being played out.

But I think we should also concede that those acts of vilification are occurring in great numbers on both sides of the debate. “No” voters are also under enormous duress for daring to come out and suggest that they are voting no. I think that (a) they should have the freedom to register their thoughts, but (b) they should feel supported as much as the LGBTIQ community if they are experiencing harm as a consequence. I wish that the debate could just be carried out in a respectful way by all sides, but unfortunately that is not what we are seeing.

I agree totally with Ms Cheyne that we are a proudly diverse community. I think that the government should be proud of what it has done to achieve a sense of belonging for many—but not for all. I am dismayed that so often this government picks its favourites for inclusion. If somehow you do not fit into that mould, you are likely to be ignored. This government has, as an example, demonised, vilified and bullied the greyhound community in this region to the extent that this has now clearly become a serious mental health issue. People in the greyhound racing community have done nothing wrong. They have gone about their business upholding the highest possible standards in the animal welfare space. Now they are having a big section of their lives forcibly removed from them.

The great cruelty of what has gone on here is that the goalposts continue to change. Initially it was going to be a ban; then it was not. Then it was going to be a cut in funding. When that did not kill them, it turned into a ban from 30 June next year. The government have form in this space. They have form in regard to tightening the screws at every turn. It will not surprise me if, when the legislation to ban the industry is tabled, the legislation is even more onerous.

This ban was never about animal welfare; never, ever. But it is now very clearly about mental health. I have serious concerns about the mental health of those in the greyhound community. They have been pushed to the edge through no fault of their own. I fear that when the final legislation on this is tabled, it will push some of them over the edge. I understand that the government will say that they are providing counselling support services through the greyhound transition task force. But let us get serious. Suggesting that someone in this community seek help from the greyhound transition task force is like suggesting to a traumatised bank staffer, a young bank teller who has had a gun pointed at his head, that they go and seek comfort from the bank robber. I can fully understand why those in the community who have been abused by this government do not want to seek comfort directly from their abuser.

There are other groups of people who feel that they have been left out completely by this government, including the victims of dog attacks, small businesses right across the territory and the increasing number of Canberrans who are struggling to keep up with the rising costs of living. If it is possible for you to stand up on your own two feet in this city, you can guarantee that the government will come looking for you, not to offer the hand of inclusion, not to offer assistance and support, but to get as much money from you as they possibly can. This government has overcommitted in many areas, and the money has to come from somewhere.

I know that much of this debate is about social inclusion. I get that. It is easy to say that this debate is not about taxes and charges. But I am here to tell you that when you feel the squeeze from all directions—when you feel the pinch from rising rates, rising land tax, rising electricity charges, rising rego fees, rising regulatory fees in every direction—and you are pushed into a financial space whereby you are struggling to breathe, you do not feel included. These people feel as though they have been left out; they do not feel included.

On a broader level, I always find it fascinating that we focus on all of these groups who we are not going to leave behind. If you are a heterosexual, employed white male over the age of 30, you are not really included in anything. I know that those on the other side would say that heterosexual, employed Anglo males have opportunities aplenty, so we do not need to look after them; they will be okay. Madam Assistant Speaker, let me tell you that 75 per cent of suicides in this country are men, and overwhelmingly they are men aged 30 to 54. When we commit to inclusion, we should not be picking favourites; we should commit to including everyone.

**MR RAMSAY** (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.27): I rise to speak today in support of Ms Cheyne's motion, though I will obviously address some of the matters that have been raised by Mr Parton in his amendment. I think it is important to highlight how it is that the ACT government is ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness, particularly, as I will be addressing, in relation to our justice system and for our seniors. I do thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this important matter to the attention of the Assembly today.

I do wish to note for the Assembly that I believe that the amendment that has been moved by Mr Parton is unfortunately, but not surprisingly, based on inaccuracy, on misrepresentation, on misunderstanding. It uses hyperbole and confuses the nature of the positions of power, inclusion and exclusion and ongoing government policy. The focus of the government's work in gambling reform which is alluded to in part of the amendment is and will remain always about those affected by problem gambling, who are some of our most marginalised members of our society. We are continuing to implement our important policies to increase inclusion and to increase support. I note for the attention of the Assembly that ClubsACT were part of the roundtable last Friday. Again there is misunderstanding and misrepresentation contained in the amendment.

The focus of the government's work in ending the greyhound racing industry is and always has been consistent since day one of this government. It is about animal welfare. We will provide services, and we are providing services. Again, I encourage Mr Parton, with his links with the greyhound racing industry, to connect people to the greyhound task force, who are open and who are consulting well on this matter.

I believe that inclusion for all people, particularly the vulnerable, has been a matter of focus of mine for many years, as I previously served on the ACT Community Inclusion Board and worked on the targeted assistance strategy. I believe that as a society we are best measured by the way that we include and value our most vulnerable members. An inclusive justice system means that we will be focused on providing timely, accessible and transparent justice to all Canberrans, mindful specifically of those who are vulnerable or experiencing disadvantage. The 2017-18 budget provides funding to help ensure that the most vulnerable people in Canberra can access the rights and protections of the justice system. The budget reflects this government's focus on delivering services to people who need them most and making Canberra the most socially inclusive city in Australia.

That is why the \$2.5 million in this budget that was given to the community legal centres is so critical for the justice system. Funding our CLCs means funding for lawyers who will help people facing disadvantage. It will mean the programs to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with family law and other court matters are enhanced. It means StreetLaw, which focuses on people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, has recurrent funding for the first time. Canberra Community Law, the Women's Legal Centre and the Environmental Defender's Office will all have funding to provide their core services. Earlier this year I joined our CLCs at the Hub on Barry Drive to hear firsthand what this funding would support. Anyone who visits this hub will see the enthusiasm for and dedication to serving this community's most vulnerable people.

One of the areas of our justice system that are unfortunately central to addressing disadvantage is the criminal system, and the government is committed to maintaining a fair criminal justice system, with a focus on restoration and on rehabilitation. We have provided an additional \$1.24 million for Legal Aid ACT, which represents people in court who face disadvantage and who cannot afford legal representation.

In addition to helping people who face disadvantage access Legal Aid, we are investing in a better criminal process. We have committed to establish a drug and alcohol court because we know that 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, families and communities. We are fortunate here in the ACT to have a Chief Justice who was instrumental in establishing the New South Wales Drug Court. As a city-state with a central courts precinct, we can bring all the necessary services together in one location, and that means that the drug and alcohol court will be easier to achieve. Establishing a drug and alcohol court is part of being a progressive city committed to restorative outcomes right across the justice system.

This government is also committed to ensuring that our seniors are able to fully participate and be valued in our community. We have a fair, sustainable and accessible concessions program that targets support to those Canberrans who are most in need. The 2016-17 budget not only contained an increase of funding for the concessions program of \$35.1 million over four years but also retargeted the concessions to the most vulnerable.

The government's concessions review identified that the most vulnerable pensioners, those in private rental accommodation, were receiving less concession support than homeowners. As a result, we redesigned the concession scheme to deliver a single payment, which provides the same level of support, \$604 per year, to both homeowners and renters. If the full value of the concession is used in meeting the cost of their electricity bill, then the intention is that this will free up money in their household budget to pay other utility bills. If the full value is not used, the resident can contact their provider for a refund of the balance of the credit.

The concessions review also identified a growing disparity between pensioners eligible for the uncapped rates concession and those covered by the more recent arrangements which cap this at \$700 a year. To address this gap over time, the government has frozen the uncapped concession at the level payable in 2015-16 until it is brought into line to ensure equitable access for all Canberrans. The ACT government also offers a rates deferral program for older Canberrans who are on fixed incomes. The program allows eligible residents to defer their rates payments until such time as their property is sold, freeing up more of their income for day-to-day expenses.

Other measures to support and ensure the social inclusion of our seniors include free travel on all ACTION buses during off-peak times for those over the age of 70, free drivers licence and car registration for people with eligible pension concession cards and funding the ACT seniors card scheme, which provides those over the age of 61 who are working no more than 20 hours a week with access to discounts and special offers from hundreds of generous, participating businesses, all building together for an inclusive Canberra. With targeted, accessible and inclusive policies, facilities and programs, we can indeed create a Canberra where everyone belongs, where everyone is valued and where everyone has the opportunity to participate. I reaffirm my commitment across all my portfolios to continuing to build a strong, inclusive, supportive society here in the ACT.

**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) (11.36): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion to the Assembly and for providing us with an opportunity to acknowledge the importance of inclusion as a core pillar of our community values. I have spoken in this place many times about the richness and diversity of our community, and we often speak proudly of Canberra as one of the most inclusive cities in the country.

However, I also acknowledge that there is more to do, because in 2017 outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans are still falling short, something we have acknowledged and spoken about in this place a number of times in recent months. In 2017 people with disability still have to navigate a system of support that, while improving, does have some way to go before it offers people with disability the sort of ease in undertaking basic, everyday activities that most Australians take for granted. In 2017 we still do not have marriage equality, despite New Zealand, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom all extending this right to their citizens, and in 2017 the federal Liberal government sought to legislate to make it lawful to offend, insult or humiliate someone because of their race or ethnicity.

The ACT government, by contrast, stands firm in our commitment to building an inclusive and welcoming city for all Canberrans. As set out in Ms Cheyne's motion, this is more than an aspiration. It is something we are actively working towards, with real investment to ensure that we deliver better support when it matters. The 2017-18 budget delivered on our election commitments with a range of initiatives to ensure diversity and difference are celebrated and supported instead of being obstacles to full participation in our community. I have spoken about these a number of times and I am sure members will be relieved that I do not intend to run through the full list of budget measures in my portfolios yet again.

I do, however, want to take this opportunity to reflect on several of the ACT government's initiatives set out in Ms Cheyne's motion but also to highlight several others. The 2017-18 budget continued the ACT government's strong support for and celebration of our diverse cultural communities. We encouraged stronger social cohesion through events like the National Multicultural Festival, multicultural community broadcasters and community participation programs, and we continue to promote Canberra as a diverse multicultural and vibrant international city with a range of arts and events programs and ongoing international engagement efforts.

This government also stands firm in our commitment as a refugee welcome zone, the only state or territory to do so, along with over 148 local governments across Australia. The ACT government stands firm on its commitment to uphold the human rights and dignity of people arriving here as refugees, humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers. In signing the refugee welcome zone declaration, the ACT government gave a commitment to provide a welcoming and safe space in our community to uphold the human rights of people from refugee backgrounds, to demonstrate compassion and enhance cultural and religious diversity in our city. The

declaration built on existing ACT government programs and initiatives which demonstrate our support for and raise further awareness about the issues affecting Canberrans from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds.

Another part of our commitments to Canberrans from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds has been to address barriers to economic participation by facilitating pathways into training and the security of a job. The ACT government continues its efforts to engage more employers in supporting potential employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, particularly refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, through the programs delivered directly by ACT government directorates and agencies such as Skills Canberra and through our community-based partners. In March this year the ACT government announced it had expanded the eligibility criteria for the Australian apprenticeships and skilled capital programs to automatically include Canberrans from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds on temporary and bridging visas, giving them greater employment opportunities in our skill shortage areas.

In the budget the ACT government committed \$1.4 million over four years for new migrants to improve their English language skills through expanding English language programs and for refugees and asylum seekers to enter the workforce with the assistance of a job brokerage service. The ACT government works closely with communities themselves, service providers and stakeholders to ensure that people arriving and living in the ACT are able to connect to, contribute to and participate in the Canberra community. For example, the ACT government's work experience and support program helps Canberrans from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to enter the workforce through on-the-job training placements.

We continue to look for better ways to engage and support Canberrans from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and to give practical effect to our refugee welcome zone commitment. We are a city that has warmly welcomed and embraced over 2,000 people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds during the past decade, an achievement we all can be proud of. It is essential for us, as a government and as a community, to collectively draw upon the knowledge and capacity of these people and continue to set an example for the rest of the nation in how culturally and linguistically diverse communities can flourish and strengthen all members of the community. This is especially the case at a time when we see the federal Liberal government proposing such retrograde changes to the citizenship test for new migrants.

It is with this in mind that I wish to reaffirm the ACT government's commitment to providing a safe and welcoming environment, inclusive of all people, regardless of their race, religion and ethnicity. I feel passionately about this issue not because we are a perfect community but rather because of the potential of what we can be as a city. We are stronger as a community when we stand together, when we embrace diversity, when we address disadvantage, when we continuously improve our support for social inclusion, when we provide genuine opportunities to enable all Canberrans to reach their full potential. That is why the ACT government continues to invest in services and initiatives that tackle barriers to participation and deliver better support for people with disability.

In 2017-18 the ACT government will invest \$130 million in the national disability insurance scheme for ongoing disability programs and services. The budget allocated \$2.2 million over four years to enable the office for disability to continue to provide policy and oversight relating to the implementation of the NDIS.

I would like to take this opportunity here to commend the staff of the office for disability for their dedication and commitment to working with the National Disability Insurance Agency and the commonwealth Department of Social Services to ensure that Canberrans with disability get the support they need and are entitled to. The office for disability continues to take an active role in monitoring and advocating on policy issues and sometimes on individual matters, reflecting the experiences of both participants and providers in the ACT. Through this role they have achieved and continue to achieve better outcomes for Canberrans engaging in the NDIS.

I will have more to say about this tomorrow, but I wish to just briefly respond to some comments Ms Lee made yesterday regarding the experiences of a number of individual families who are at risk of losing their access to short-term accommodation, better known in the community as respite. As Ms Lee acknowledged, I have been endeavouring to keep her in the loop on this matter. For the information of all members, I have written to both the commonwealth minister, the Hon Christian Porter, and the chair of the NDIA board, Dr Helen Nugent, on the urgent need to ensure that the affected families get the support they need and also on the policy issue of pricing for short-term accommodation.

On Monday morning this week I met with Dr Nugent on this matter, following a recent phone call with her and a call to Minister Porter last week. For some months, including in the ACT government's submissions to the Productivity Commission, I have been expressing concern about the potential for market failure in supports for people with high and complex needs. This is just one of the things that occupy the office for disability but it really highlights just how important it is that the ACT remains closely engaged in the design and delivery of this major national reform. The ACT is the first jurisdiction to fully transition to the scheme and contributes almost 60 per cent of funding. The ACT government remains committed to continuing to support people with disability living in the ACT community.

In the 2017-18 budget we also invested \$200,000 over four years in funding for disability inclusion grants that deliver training, increase awareness and provide infrastructure modifications to increase opportunities for Canberrans with a disability to participate in community and voluntary groups. This is in addition to the government's existing grants programs which help individuals and organisations showcase the contributions and achievements of people with disability on and around the International Day of People with Disability, or I-Day, on 3 December each year.

It also builds on the involve initiative, which is the ACT government's response to the national disability strategy. Involve is a movement of people with and without disability, community organisations, industry and government acting together to achieve change that empowers people with a disability. Involve supports and

complements the Chief Minister's inclusion awards, which celebrate the contribution of individuals, community organisations and businesses who are actively promoting the inclusion of people with disability. This year's awards will be on 14 December, and nominations will open soon.

Applications for the new disability inclusion grants—as the disability access grants program has been renamed, at the request of the disability reference group—will also open very soon, possibly as soon as this afternoon. They will encourage greater community participation for people with disability and build ongoing opportunities for people with disability to connect with their communities. The design of this program has been informed by the disability reference group, and I thank them for their thoughtful consideration of how the program can best complement existing grants, including the participation grants in other portfolios, including sport and recreation. The ACT government is proud to provide grants to support events and programs that aim to promote awareness and greater understanding of disability issues.

**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) (11.46): I am pleased to rise today in support of this motion and I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing it on. It provides us with a valuable opportunity to discuss some of the many complex issues that arise in the space of social inclusion and the issues of inequity and inequality that arise in our community. Ms Cheyne's motion sets out a range of areas where the government is making a deliberate effort to improve the lives of people in our community who have struggled at times through a range of things, whether it has been social exclusion, disadvantage or the like.

Within my ministerial portfolios there are a number of issues that are brought up by Ms Cheyne's motion. I am pleased to take the opportunity to speak about that and a few other issues that arise today. In my justice portfolio this is an area of particular opportunity. I know that the attorney has made some comments in this space already, but I really want to elaborate, particularly on the idea of justice reinvestment. It is a concept that has been around for a number of years, and people who have read about this will have seen it spoken of extensively in academic circles. One of my early frustrations with it was: how do we take that very sensible sounding idea and make it into something practical? I am pleased that we have sought to bite that bullet in the ACT government and actually tackle that very practical question of how we do it.

The notion of justice reinvestment is a very simple one. The idea is that you spend money up-front on a range of programs and social inclusion measures in order to either deter people from being involved in the criminal justice system or, for those who have been, break the cycle of involvement with the criminal justice system. The strength of this is not only for the individuals involved; it also promotes community safety through reducing crime and reducing the costs of the broader justice system. It is that classic idea of investing to get a better return down the line. We must take the opportunity to apply that principle and make it work here in the ACT.

I am very pleased that the government has sought to do that through a dedicated commitment to furthering policy development in the justice reinvestment space and is starting to put money into those programs. A great example is the government investing in a trial with Winnunga Aboriginal health services to better support vulnerable families, and we will soon be making announcements about increased bail support programs. The Yarrabi Bamirr trial—or “walk tall” in Ngunnawal language—is a program I am very optimistic about, working in partnership with the Aboriginal health service at Winnunga Nimmityjah, taking their expertise and the government contribution to that and really trying to make a difference for families who run the risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system, and making early intervention. These are the sorts of things that can make a real difference.

Another example is the successful extended through-care program, which aims to help detainees find stable accommodation, employment and training opportunities post release, as well as providing access to health services and a range of other basics that, when people come out of custody, they are not necessarily well organised to access. It can mean very basic things. One of the components of extended through-care is getting people a bus pass, a MyWay ticket, so that they can attend their parole hearings or their various reporting requirements. If someone does not have the skills and the mechanisms to attend those appointments, they can suddenly find themselves very quickly breaching, which brings them back into conflict with the criminal justice system.

These are important initiatives. They are very practical. And while these efforts take time and money, we know they are worth it; we know that we have a stronger and healthier community when work to break down the sometimes structural disadvantages and barriers to social inclusion that exist. I could speak for much longer about the justice space. There is much to be done in that space, but the philosophy that the government is bringing to that space is one that I believe will reap dividends down the line, both individually and for the community as a whole.

The mental health portfolio is another space where I have particular responsibility. Poor mental health and wellbeing concerns can still be a very isolating experience. I think we are making process as a community in breaking down the stigma around mental health problems, but we have some distance to go. As a government, I think we are on the front foot in communicating that we are a city-state that cares, that we want to work with people and support them. Again, there are a range of improvements to be made, but the steps that have already been taken are providing an environment in which people should not feel isolated or excluded but instead feel that they can come forward.

I could talk about these things much more extensively, but I will turn to the amendment moved by Mr Parton. The Greens will not be supporting this amendment. Between doing some other things upstairs, I did catch parts of Mr Parton’s speech. I want to reflect on the comments that he made about white males over 35. I do not intend to comment specifically on the language that he chose to use, but I think this draws out the really interesting idea about wanting to work on the distinction between

equity and equality. This is a really interesting discussion that happens in a number of places, and members who have taken the opportunity to search this online will perhaps have seen the very famous cartoon or graphic with three people behind a fence attempting to watch a baseball game. If you have never taken the opportunity to simply Google “equality versus equity”—it is the key image that comes up. I think it is a very powerful image and it conveys some ideas.

I took the opportunity, in light of Mr Parton’s comments, to do that, and I picked up a quote from a lady called Amy Sun, who wrote an article; it is findable on the internet. She says:

Equity and equality are two strategies we can use in an effort to produce fairness.

*Equity* is giving everyone what they need to be successful. *Equality* is treating everyone the same.

Equality *aims* to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help.

That is why the Greens reject the analysis that Mr Parton put forward in the very simplistic way he put it today, because these problems are more complex. We cannot use simple labels to deal with these very challenging questions. We cannot simply say, “This group of people or this group of people.” We need to look at some of these policy challenges through careful filters to identify the responses that government can put in place to address some of the inequity issues that exist in our community. We will not be able to support this amendment. When we think about some of these policy questions, the way we try to think about them is to think about that distinction between those two labels and what it can mean in terms of policy application. So we will not be supporting the amendment; we will be supporting the motion brought forward by Ms Cheyne.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.54): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion forward today. It has led to an interesting debate. I will commence my remarks in the spirit of tripartisanship and thank all members for their support, it would appear, of large parts of the motion before us.

I note that Mr Parton’s amendment does not seek to touch on parts 1, 2 and 3 of Ms Cheyne’s motion, so I think we can take from that, at least for parts 1 and 2, a recognition across all parties and by all members in this chamber that we seek to achieve a diverse community that supports people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, belief systems, social and economic demographics, sexual orientations and the like, and that we acknowledge that the community is stronger if everyone has a sense of belonging, feels supported and is able to contribute to their full capacity.

The motion notes a range of important initiatives contained within the recent territory budget that go to providing additional support or continuation of longstanding programs of support for a number of Canberrans, who are outlined in parts 2(a) through (j). Part 3 of the motion highlights a range of practical programs that the

government has in place. I note that in that extensive list there are a number of elements that this place has recently debated and that have received unanimous support. Others—for example, the safe schools program—are a little more controversial and do not attract the support of all members in this place.

I think it is important in debating a motion like this to highlight those areas of agreement and then to focus on areas of disagreement and seek to find positive ways forward, because it has been my experience in this place that some of these issues were not always unanimously supported at the time that the government brought forward a change but that over time, as a result of laws changing or societal attitudes changing, or as a result of leadership from government, attitudes have changed.

Just in the 11 years that I have been in this place, issues that were once bitterly fought are now seen as areas of bipartisan or tripartisan agreement. Many of those relate to the treatment of sexual or gender minorities, and I can certainly point to quite a transition of attitudes among those opposite on those issues. There was a time, just going back to the last decade, when even the question of recognition of same-sex relationships by way of civil partnerships, of civil unions, was bitterly opposed and was going to be the end of civilisation as we knew it and would undermine marriage et cetera.

Ten years on from those debates, we are now being told to settle for that particular outcome because that achieves functional equality but not necessarily symbolic equality. I find it a little distressing, in the context of the debates that we are having now in this country, to be told that it is stressful for everyone when we did not need to have this process. We did not need to have a non-binding, voluntary postal survey that has caused a great degree of stress not just across this city but across the country.

Just to be clear, there has been a degree of political contention already in relation to what the ACT government has done to provide additional support for our community during this period. But this is now an issue of concern that been raised not only here in the ACT but also on the national stage. What we have seen is a 20 per cent increase in demand for support services for the LGBTI community, particularly those seeking mental health counselling as a result of the issues that are being debated now.

We have locally provided more support for the LGBTI community consortium that includes organisations like Northside Community Services, A Gender Agenda, the Aids Action Council and Sexual Health and Family Planning who are providing additional support as a result of the funding that the ACT government has provided.

We are working with our ministerial advisory council to continue to closely monitor this situation. As distressing as this process is for all who are expressing opinions in relation to the issue of marriage, there are ways in which one can express an opinion on that issue without offending others. We could all learn from that. That does apply, indeed, to both sides of the debate. It is a fascinating thing: freedom of religion as well as freedom from religion in a secular liberal democracy. If you do not seek to impose your world view on others, generally speaking you will go okay in that debate.

**Ms Lawder:** From both sides.

**MR BARR:** From both sides, yes. I want freedom from religion in my life. I do not need other people to impose their views on my life, my relationships, my family and anything to do with how I conduct myself in the context of being a law-abiding citizen in this secular liberal democracy. I want freedom from religion. Others want freedom of religion, and I respect that too. I do not seek to impose my views on other people's relationships, their families and how they live their lives. If our secular liberal democracy can respond to those issues in a positive way in the next few months, which I hope it will, then I think we will be a better city as a result.

This motion goes to highlight a number of very important programs that we are undertaking and we will continue to undertake as priorities for this government that I believe reflect the values of the majority of Canberrans. I acknowledge that not every Canberran supports every program that we will undertake in this area, but the nature of democracy is that we took to the election a platform of reforms and initiatives, and people voted.

All of the substantive issues that have been raised by Mr Parton in his amendment have been discussed in the context of, at times, not just one but sometimes more than one election campaign, have been the dominant issues in territory politics for most of the last decade and have been conclusively resolved at elections on a number of occasions. So we will continue to implement those policies, because they are core values for this government and core values for the parties that make up the majority of members in this Assembly.

We acknowledge that not everyone agrees, but the majority does, and we will continue to pursue those reforms. That is not to say that we do not appreciate that there are others who have a different view, but our view is not for changing on some issues that are fundamental. Equally, on the other side of the debate, there would be nothing that I could say or do or that any of my colleagues could say or do that would change fundamental beliefs held by others. But we have a democratic process to resolve that. We have this parliament as a representative democracy and a forum in which the debate will take place. On the issues raised by Mr Parton in the context of those policies, we have clear positions. We took those positions to the election. We were re-elected and we will continue to implement those policies.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (12.04): I would like to thank Ms Cheyne for bringing forward this motion today and thank others for their comments so far. It is quite true that Canberra is a very diverse, welcoming, vibrant and adaptable place. It is diverse and welcoming, and that is why many of us who may not have been born here have chosen to make it our home. In fact, the opposition benches are very reflective of the diversity in the Canberra community in terms of the number of women MLAs and men MLAs, the number of cultures represented, including some of those people who may have been born overseas—quite a number—and with views as diverse as the community that we represent. That is why I think it is a good opportunity to speak to this motion today, which is about diversity and inclusion.

The motion gives a bit of a nod to the sustainable development goals, specifically No 10, which is about reducing inequality, including that based on income as well as on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Our community here in Canberra does a lot to ensure that our differences are embraced and celebrated. A motion on community inclusion was brought forward in the Assembly by Mr Steel on 29 March this year. Today's motion and some of the speeches on the motion have some similarities to that motion. All of us here agree that Canberra is a proudly diverse community, with a rich collection of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, belief systems, sexual orientations and social and economic demographics, and that the whole ACT community is stronger when every person has a sense of belonging, feels supported and is able to contribute to their full capacity, absolutely.

I am proud that in a previous working life I was an advocate for people who otherwise may have been without a voice in our community. This motion is an extension of that. It is absolutely imperative to support our LGBTIQ community. There has been quite a bit of debate about that already. This motion, in item 3, states:

... recognises that the ACT government is already taking practical steps to promote an inclusive and supportive community ...

That is true; yet, according to an ACTCOSS fact sheet of June 2017, 12.6 per cent or 28,639 of all ACT residents are in the most disadvantaged 20 per cent of Australians. It states:

... figures that measure disadvantage at area level conceal the disadvantage of many of these people, who accordingly do not live in disadvantaged areas.

The fact sheet also states:

Cost of living pressures for those on low income in the ACT rose over the past year. The consumer price index ... rose 1.8 per cent—higher than the national average of 1.5 per cent; the selected living index (SLCI) for other government transfer recipient (1.8%) and age pensioner (1.6%) households was also above the national CPI; while the SLCI for both employee (1.0%) and self-funded retiree (1.4%) households was below the national CPI figure. In sum, the general cost of living in the ACT increased above the national rate while the cost of living for low income households rose at a higher level than other households.

This motion, in item 3, “recognises that the ACT government is already taking practical steps to promote an inclusive and supportive community”, yet an article in yesterday's *Canberra Times* states:

Young Canberrans with high needs could be locked out of respite care by Christmas unless a last-minute solution is found to “critical” funding shortfalls ...

Families who spoke to *The Canberra Times* said they had been left in limbo ever since, unable to find other providers to take on their children once the changes kick in on October 26.

Item 3 of the motion “recognises that the ACT government is already taking practical steps to promote an inclusive and supportive community”, yet earlier this year, in February, an article in the *Canberra Times* stated:

Homelessness services are reporting a rise in clients who are elderly women, some resorting to sleeping in cars and couch surfing for shelter before seeking help.

Rising rental prices in areas previously more accessible for low-income groups and pensioners have locked out older women with low superannuation and savings ...

In Canberra, 316 people aged 55 years or older sought help from homelessness services last year and 44 per cent in this group were women, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Of all homeless clients, 6.8 per cent were aged more than 55.

Within this age group, 79 clients were aged 65 or older.

At item 3 the motion “recognises that the ACT government is already taking practical steps to promote an inclusive and supportive community”, yet earlier this year, in July, an article stated:

Frontline staff, former detainees and government officials have come forward to blow the whistle on a series of disturbing incidents—

at Bimberi youth detention centre—

between 2011 and 2017.

Troubled children have allegedly been abused and humiliated by a small number of “bad apple” staff, several inside sources alleged.

Staff have themselves been threatened and attacked by volatile detainees, with occupational violence dismissed as part and parcel of their difficult job, sources added.

The motion, at item (3), “recognises that the ACT government is already taking practical steps to promote an inclusive and supportive community”, yet an article last year in the *Canberra Times* stated:

Foster carers say they feel abandoned by the ACT government as transitional arrangements during an overhaul of the foster-care system fall short.

At item (3), the motion “recognises that the ACT government is already taking practical steps to promote an inclusive and supportive community”, yet on 26 May this year, an article in the *Canberra Times* stated:

If you need more proof that Canberra’s shortage of affordable housing is crushing struggling families, look no further than 17-year-old Stephen.

That is a pseudonym. The article continues:

He is the sole carer for his two little brothers aged nine and 10, and his father who six weeks ago had open-heart surgery. His dad was then terminated from his job as a truck driver when he was unable to work due to his ill-health. The boys' mother died last year of cancer aged just 39.

I could go on. I have more examples here, about poor record-keeping for people receiving mental health care in Canberra, according to the Auditor-General; more Canberra kids in care as advocates call for community prevention; articles about the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm—that it is no longer going to be a residential service, as was originally promised; a mother not told her sons were bashed in the Alexander Maconochie Centre until days later; the ACT suburbs with the highest and lowest levels of educational disadvantage; and that, unfortunately and unacceptably, lower educational performance in schools correlated with a higher proportion of students from a low socio-economic background.

There is still much to be done. I also note that, unlike sustainable development goal 10, this motion does not talk about freedom of religion. I take Mr Barr's point, and I can agree with him, about freedom from religion. That does not mean that we should not support freedom of religion, and I am a bit disappointed that it was left out of this motion.

Let us not engage in an orgy of self-congratulation about how well we are doing. Let us focus on doing more. Let us focus on outcomes. Let us focus on supporting those Canberrans who need our help, and not bring a grab bag of multiple different things, ranging from women in sport to justice reinvention—a huge grab bag of different things. (*Time expired.*)

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (12.14): The people of Canberra bring this city to life, with myriad languages, foods, arts and festivals that reflect our diverse community. Living amongst such a rich mix of people gives us valuable opportunities to be exposed to new perspectives, skills and life experiences. We learn from each other, and our differences give us fuel to grow and develop as individuals, to embrace unfamiliar ideas and to foster tolerance. We have heard today about the practical steps that the ACT government is taking to create a welcoming city for all Canberrans. Whether you are LGBTIQ, a refugee, you are learning English as a second language, facing economic disadvantage, or finding your way back from the justice system, Canberra is your home, and you deserve to have the same opportunities as anyone else.

I thank all members for their contributions and for their strong support for the majority of this motion today. I note that Labor, like the Greens, will not be supporting the amendment put forward by Mr Parton. I do think that some of Mr Parton's statements were hyperbolic and conflated. They have largely been addressed by the ministers who have spoken, and I do not think I need to legitimise them further with a response. Ironically, I note that the last part of Mr Parton's amendment is probably the most divisively written thing he could have come up with, and I also note for the record his apparent reluctance in putting it forward.

I spoke earlier about the impact of social exclusion on our LGBTIQ community, and I would like to close by speaking about an element of social inclusion which is close to my heart—the inclusion of women. Despite our efforts over many decades, women still face greater risks of violence and other forms of abuse. We are still grossly underpaid for our work and still cop the lion's share of domestic duties.

The ACT government takes gender equality and equity very seriously, and we are proactive in encouraging progress. Already in this term of government we are helping women to reach new heights in the workplace and on the sporting field. We want to see women frame their career goals in terms of what they want to do, not what society has historically told them they should do, and that is why we have committed \$1 million over four years to get more women into male-dominated trades and to assist mature-age workers to upskill and to re-skill.

We are also working hard to address the difference in pay, opportunities and public recognition afforded to men's and women's sport. The ACT government is increasing the opportunities for elite sportswomen and is encouraging more Canberra women and girls to participate in sport. This year we invested in a partnership with Netball NSW to attract two Giants netball matches to Canberra. With the support of Netball ACT, this partnership was able to include various community engagement activities and the formation of the Canberra Giants to provide an improved pathway for local athletes through the second-tier Australian Netball League.

We coordinated a big “women in sport” week during March, leading into the first Giants AFLW and Giants netball matches in Canberra. The week included a women's forum and screening of the documentary *A League of Her Own*, which was attended by about 50 leading sports administrators, athletes and supporters of women's sport.

We ensured that available funding within the national league team program was, for the first time, split evenly between male and female teams. And we made sure that the CBR Sport Awards in December last year provided an equal platform to celebrate the achievements of both male and female elite athletes and community sportspeople. We are also promoting greater representation of women on sporting boards, to ensure that the management and strategic direction of sporting associations benefit from the experiences, skills and vision of women as well as men.

For those who have given up on dreams of becoming elite sportswomen—like me; it was ruled out very early on—we will have a new resource to make it easier to get involved in sport around the city. The women in sport online portal will connect Canberra women and girls with information about fitness and sport activities and resources around the city. Finally, we are investing in new infrastructure to make community sporting facilities more accessible for women and girls. The recently reopened Gowrie neighbourhood oval pavilion has been refurbished, with a focus on being female-friendly through the provision of individual cubicles for showers and toilets within the change rooms. All of these measures add up to send this clear message to Canberra women and girls: you belong on the sporting fields just as much as your male counterparts; we are in awe of your sporting abilities, and we respect and admire your strength, skill and determination.

Women should not be penalised simply for being women. The ACT government is standing up for women and girls in our city to promote equality and deliver fair opportunities for everyone, no matter your sex. Social inclusion underpins our success as a community. We are stronger together, and we can only reach our potential when every Canberran has the opportunity to pursue their goals and to play an active role in shaping our city. With this, we will truly invoke the UNICEF definition of social inclusion: “a society based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity”.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 8

Noes 11

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

Amendment negatived.

Original question resolved in the affirmative.

**Sitting suspended from 12.24 to 2.30 pm.**

### **Questions without notice Clubs—lease variation charge**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. In the *Canberra Times* of 20 September, your spokesperson is quoted in relation to an LVC waiver as saying:

If a significant community benefit can be delivered as the result of a waiver, or partial waiver, then it will be considered ...

Chief Minister, have you issued a waiver or partial waiver for LVC for any Labor Club development, and, if so, which ones?

**MR BARR:** I do not believe I have. I think the particular issue that the member constantly refers to in relation to a site in Braddon—

**Mr Coe:** The old scheme.

**MR BARR:** was in fact, yes, under the change of use charge, and the before and after values were assessed in the valuation process as the same because the old scheme, the old change of use charge scheme, allowed a certain amount of off-site works and other works to be discounted against the change of use charge. That, of course, is not applicable in the lease variation charge process. With respect to the accusation that an LVC waiver was applied, the LVC did not exist at that time. It was under the old change of use charge scheme, and the process was followed to the letter of the law.

**MR COE:** Treasurer, are any Labor Club developments currently under active consideration for an LVC waiver?

**MR BARR:** Certainly not by me, and I believe I would be the only person who would be able to waive a lease variation under the current legislation. So, no, I have no such requests before me.

**MR PARTON:** What actions do you take to avoid conflicts of interest when considering LVC variations for Labor club projects?

**MR BARR:** I have not received any so the issue itself has not arisen. Were that to be the case, it would be appropriate to seek advice from the various sources available to me in relation to that matter.

The Assembly has, indeed, put in place a number of mechanisms for members to seek such advice in their role as members. Equally, I have the capacity to draw upon the advice of the ACT public service as well in relation to those matters. I would in those instances—in fact, in all instances—seek advice and input from relevant ACT government agencies in relation to any request for waiver or partial waiver of the lease variation charge.

As I have outlined to this place on a number of occasions, and consistent with what was reported in the newspaper today, there does need to be a public benefit associated with a waiver or partial waiver of the lease variation charge. There have been examples where such a public benefit exists and where it would be appropriate to provide a waiver.

**Mr Coe:** Like in Griffith.

**MR BARR:** In the instance that the Leader of the Opposition interjects with, yes, there is a substantial public benefit in the context of what has been constructed at the University of Canberra; that is to the benefit of all students at the university.

**Mr Coe:** Who got the benefit?

**MR BARR:** The benefit is with the University of Canberra, and the Brumbies and the broader community, witnessed in the physical building and all of the space, institutions and resources that are available. (*Time expired.*)

**Planning—dangerous substance storage**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to Minister for Planning and Land Management regarding the Planning and Development Bill 2017, passed yesterday. Minister, why has it taken six years since the Mitchell fire and four years since the Lloyd report for you to propose the changes to law to force Canberra's warehouse owners to apply for development approvals to store large amounts of chemicals in their buildings?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Lawder for her question and note that there is a motion on the notice paper for this afternoon in regard to other matters of building safety. But I want to add that there has been quite a deal of work that the government has done from the review and the recommendations from that review into the Mitchell fire. Quite a number of actions have been taken in relation to ensuring safety for those buildings and those owners that actually store hazardous materials. There has been quite a lot of work within the EPSD directorate to audit the buildings and the owners that do that work.

**Ms Lawder:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, as to relevance, the question was why it has taken six years to change the laws, not what may have taken place by the directorate in regard to safety. Why has it taken six years since the fire?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I will ask the minister, in the time he has left, to come to that point please.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said, quite a lot of work has occurred in the lead-up to the legislation that we passed yesterday, supported by the Canberra Liberals and the Greens in this parliament, and that work needed to be done in the lead-up to the regulations that were changed yesterday for the Planning and Development Act to ensure that future planning takes into account hazardous materials and their storage.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, do you know how many businesses currently store large quantities of dangerous substances in the ACT?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** My understanding is that around 800 lessees store hazardous materials or placard materials in the ACT. Work has been undertaken with the directorate, with WorkSafe ACT and, of course, Access Canberra to ensure that they store those materials in the correct manner. Each facility that is a placard facility that stores hazardous materials needs to ensure that they have a hazardous materials storage program and a register that is regularly attended by to Access Canberra.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, how will ACT Fire & Rescue know what substances they are dealing with if there were to be a chemical fire at such a site in Canberra today?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** ACT Fire & Rescue are aware of the placard amounts because they are on a register with ACT government that is supplied to ACT Fire & Rescue. Those amounts are also placarded out the front of the buildings. You would notice

when you see a building that stores these materials a placard out the front which describes what is in there. Also, the hazardous program that they must have with each set of materials is reported on a register within the building as well. So when ACT Fire & Rescue attend they know exactly what is in the building.

### **Planning—Federal Golf Club**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the minister for planning and relates to proposals for residential development at the Federal Golf Club and a nearby site in Deakin adjacent to the Telstra exchange. Minister, given the closeness of the sites, the joint traffic impacts they will have on surrounding roads, the impacts they could both have on Red Hill nature reserve, and the fact that both sites have had previous unsuccessful attempts at rezoning, will the government do an integrated plan that encompasses both sites?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. It is very important, of course, that we take into account all of the implications of development in those particular zones. So we need to take into account traffic management and impacts on the environment, and take the community into account during those programs, too. Each time a proponent comes forward with one of these proposals, all those matters are considered. Indeed my understanding is that the proponent for the golf club is doing that pre-DA work at the moment and involving the community in those conversations.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Minister, what will you do to ensure that the joint impacts are considered, not just separate impacts?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The important thing here is that our Planning Directorate works with the engineers within the traffic section to ensure that the traffic engineers have input into the planning system, to make sure that the impact on our roads across the ACT and the impact on traffic in the ACT is regulated along with any approvals in Planning.

### **Planning—Canberra Greyhound Racing Club application**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, in April, the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club submitted an application to the independent Planning and Land Authority for an extension of the club's lease over their site in Narrabundah. Minister, was this application all in order in terms of the requirements for making such applications?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Parton for his question. I have not seen the application. As Mr Parton said, it has gone to the independent authority; so I am unaware of the content of it and whether it would be applicable in that sense.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, why has this application been with the independent authority for five months without a result for the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** As I said, I would imagine that the authorities are considering the merits of the application, but at this stage I do not have any further information on it. I am happy to take that part of the question on notice and come back to the Assembly.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, have you or your office had any engagement, conversations or interactions with the planning and land authority in regard to the extension of the lease for the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I certainly have not.

### **Government—inclusiveness policies**

**MS CHEYNE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please provide the Assembly with an overview of the ways in which the government is supporting diversity and inclusion in our community?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the question and for bringing this matter before the Assembly today. This presents an important opportunity to highlight the various ways that the government is working to make Canberra Australia's most inclusive city. I would particularly highlight, in response to the member's question, the support that we are providing for refugees and new migrants who are looking to enter the workforce, investments we are making in homelessness and housing support services, and the recent expansions to community transport services to support a range of vulnerable Canberrans.

We support inclusion in education through particularly significant investments in the needs of students with disabilities in the public school system and across the education system more broadly. We, of course, also have a very clear commitment to ensuring that Canberra schools are safe schools.

Whether you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person maintaining connection to country and culture, a refugee seeking to find haven from trouble, people struggling with homelessness, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex, or an older person wanting to stay connected, we as a government seek to provide services and to include you in our community.

But we do more than just saying it. Through our budget initiatives each year we seek to back that up with real investment in services and supports where they are needed. During what has been one of the most divisive periods in Australian political history—and certainly we are living through a few months of pretty distressing public debate on LGBTI issues—we have established the office for LGBTIQ affairs here in the ACT. This is an important initiative at this time for this community. *(Time expired.)*

**MS CHEYNE:** Chief Minister, can you please provide more detail on the refugee English courses and jobs services and the benefits these will provide to the community?

**MR BARR:** The government made an allocation of \$1.4 million through the budget to ensure that there is more support for refugees and new migrants looking to enter the workforce. This provision will be used to expand English language training programs and to establish a jobs brokerage service. We know that we can do more than just welcome new arrivals. We know that we can support them to thrive once they are here.

Community discussions have certainly highlighted English proficiency amongst new Canberrans from overseas as a particular challenge in relation to social inclusion and employment. Having difficulty conversing in English is undoubtedly a barrier to people settling successfully and finding a good job. Overcoming language barriers is only one part of the challenge. There are further challenges in identifying the work opportunities, and this budget initiative is particularly focused on establishing a dedicated job broker to engage with multicultural communities. The broker will help match people with jobs that suit their skills and qualifications and assist employers in working with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Through these initiatives and a range of others that the government has put in place, we are working very hard to ensure that new arrivals to Canberra can easily get a job, can contribute to our workforce and become even more active members of our community.

**MS CODY:** Chief Minister, what additional support is the government providing to the LGBTIQ community to support and promote inclusion during the postal survey?

**MR BARR:** I have said it before and I will say it again: this survey process is unnecessary and it is extremely distressing for many members of the community. It is damaging to LGBTIQ Australians and Canberrans but it also impacts on their families and their friends. What we have seen locally and nationally is a significant increase in demand for support services.

ReachOut, which provides support services to young people and their families, has seen a 20 per cent increase in demand due to the survey. The LGBTIQ phone counselling service QLife has also seen a similar increase in demand. This is expected to increase over the course of the survey period.

So, to assist the community, the ACT government has redirected \$105,000 worth of funding to the LGBTIQ Community Consortium here in Canberra to provide additional counselling and support services. This includes the development of support material and resources; additional individual counselling sessions using capability from the AIDS Action Council, Relationships Australia and professional practitioners; a series of tailored group workshops and activities; and professional education sessions tailored to groups and organisations.

In addition, through in-kind contributions, funding has been provided from the Office for LGBTIQ Affairs to promote a more inclusive Canberra, including support for increased community engagement on one of the major LGBTIQ community festival days, held at the end of October, Fair Day on Saturday, 28 October.

These support services, and a high level of visibility during the survey period, are important signals and indicators of the ACT government's support during this difficult period.

Those who are saying that they are feeling stress because they are voting no are getting just a small insight into what it is like to be gay or lesbian in this country. *(Time expired.)*

## Visitors

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a delegation from Girl Guides. Welcome to your Assembly.

## Questions without Notice

### National disability insurance scheme—mental health services

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. You advised in a response to estimates question on notice E17-559 that:

I have been advised that with the transition to NDIS some psychosocial services eg group programs have been discontinued as the NDIS model does not provide sufficient funding to maintain sustainability for the providers. This has reduced choice of program options for people with a mental illness.

Minister, which services for people with mental health problems have ended in the ACT with the transition to the NDIS?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Ms Lee has indentified an issue that is happening as part of the transition to the NDIS, which is where in the past people would have been able to attend services for free, for want of a better expression, the providers have found that people are not willing to pay for them on an individual visit basis, so this has challenged the service delivery model that existed prior to the NDIS. I will have to take on notice the question around which services have closed. The specific one I can think of is the Rainbow Room, a service I think members will be aware of. It closed earlier this year.

I do not want to get into semantics, but there is the question of whether services have closed because of the NDIS. Some service providers are reorienting what they have done in light of the NDIS model and are moving away from some of the group provision services and into individual service delivery to respond to the environment the NDIS has created. There are certainly some transition issues here and we are seeing changes.

One of the challenges when it comes to mental health is people simply accessing the NDIS. Because of the definition of the NDIS some people across the spectrum of mental health services are within the scope of the NDIS while others are not. So there is certainly a significant period of transition in the psychosocial disability space, and it is something I am very concerned about.

I hosted a meeting recently, which Minister Stephen-Smith also came to, of a dozen key service providers in the city to get some feedback from them on what is going on and to make sure we are keeping abreast of the issues arising in this space. I think there is some distance to go. Certainly it is on the agenda at COAG. The federal government has identified money in the federal budget. They spoke of \$80 million in the mental health space, but that is going out on a pro rata basis across four years, so that is \$20 million for the entire country. *(Time expired.)*

**MS LEE:** Minister, how many people with a mental illness have lost services as a result of the transition to the NDIS?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I do not know that that is possible to quantify, in the sense that, to pick up the point I was just making, some people are applying for the NDIS and are being accepted; others have been rejected. Because mental health can be episodic by nature, it does not necessarily fit well with the NDIS model. So there are some transition difficulties here.

I am not sure if I can give you the number of people who have missed out. I suspect that there are figures about people who have applied and not received a package under the NDIS and have identified as having a mental health issue, but they would not be figures that I think the ACT government has.

I will take the question on notice and see if there is any data I have in that space that I could provide to the Assembly.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, what actions have you taken to ensure that people with a mental illness have not been disadvantaged in the ACT during the transition to the NDIS?

**MR RATTENBURY:** There are a number of actions that the ACT government has already taken. I spoke of the meeting with Minister Stephen-Smith, and I have spoken with service providers to help them inform us of gaps they were seeing and problems that were arising. The ACT government has put aside funds to provide some transition. Over the past couple of years we have funded some services beyond their previous contracts to enable them to continue to operate and to develop their models to transition to the NDIS.

They are a couple of the practical steps that have been taken and we have not finished in that space. I think there are further steps we will need to take as issues emerge with this transition to the NDIS.

### **Public housing—Holder**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development and relates to the public housing development in Holder. Minister, the traffic study for this development states:

Stapylton Street however, is expected to experience a 36% increase in traffic volume per day for the section north of Frankland Street and 56.3% for the section south of Frankland Street.

Minister, have you notified residents of Holder to expect traffic increases of over 56 per cent?

**MS BERRY:** The Public Housing Renewal Taskforce has met with the Holder community and the residents association a number of times regarding the development that will occur at Holder. Those discussions have included any issues that the community has raised around traffic.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, beyond the residents action group which has been formed by a small number of local residents, what information have you provided to the broader Holder community?

**MS BERRY:** I understand that the Holder residents action group have provided a fair amount of information about the development, which would include the traffic survey, and, of course, that information will be available online once the development application is made. Then the community will be able to engage in the process in the normal way.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, will any trees be removed from the Holder site as part of the development? Has geotechnical survey work been completed on the site and will you publish the results?

**MS BERRY:** I understand that some trees will need to be removed. However, I will get some advice and confirm that information for members. If geotechnical advice has been provided to the task force through this program and it can be made public, I will get some advice on that as well.

### **Public housing—Mawson**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development and it relates to the public housing development in Mawson. Minister, what has the government changed, in response to consultation with Mawson residents, on the original plan for public housing on this site? When will the final DA be lodged?

**MS BERRY:** There have been quite a number of changes that were made through conversations with the Mawson community. One of the changes included a change to the number of actual dwellings on that site from 11 to eight, and there are some changes round access to the site as well.

When I went to a public meeting up there a few months ago—Caroline Le Couteur was that meeting as well—the community were genuinely engaged and happy with the process so far. Woden Community Service was also at the meeting, as well as the

community garden organisation, who were keen to work with the community to build a community garden and a place where people could come together and support each other. So there have been some changes. The development application will be lodged soon.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, are there any other sites in Mawson being considered for any public housing development at present?

**MS BERRY:** Not as far as I am aware.

**MR HANSON:** Other than through attendance at meetings, in what way are you informing residents of Mawson about the changes that are being made in their suburb as a result of the building of these public housing developments?

**MS BERRY:** Through the ordinary development application process and, of course, I remind members that the development application consultation process has been extended for all of these sites for additional weeks to ensure that the community can engage as much as possible and for the length of time that we have improved that process for.

### **Education—preschools**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, I understand that families with school-age children who live in the suburbs of Weston and Stirling have been directed to Duffy and Chapman preschools in the 2018 school year if they are looking for eventual school placement at Arawang Primary School. Minister, what does this mean for the future of other preschools in the area such as Weston preschool?

**MS BERRY:** I am advised that a decision has not been made in line with the question that Mr Wall has asked. The Education Directorate is talking with the community and assessing the enrolment in those areas to ensure that those children's and those families' needs are met.

**MR WALL:** Minister, when will a decision be taken as to the future of the Weston preschool?

**MS BERRY:** Following conversations with the community.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, are any other preschools being considered for closure at this time?

**MS BERRY:** No.

### **Government—carers strategy**

**MS CODY:** My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Can the minister please update the Assembly on how the government is delivering on its commitment to recognise the valuable contribution carers make to the ACT community through the development of an ACT carers strategy.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Cody for her question and her interest in this very important matter. The government recognises the valuable contribution made by tens of thousands of Canberrans who provide unpaid care to family members, friends and neighbours. The development of the ACT carers strategy will improve support for carers and acknowledge the difference they make in people's lives and the wider community. Development of the strategy is progressing well and has already engaged many members of the Canberra community.

In the 2017-18 budget, the ACT government committed to providing \$200,000 over three years in administrative and financial support to develop and implement the ACT carers strategy. This was in addition to the \$50,000 committed in 2016-17 to engage Carers ACT and democracyCo in the development and delivery of the consultation process. Through this process, the ACT government is fulfilling its election commitment to develop a carers strategy, as well as its commitment to strengthen community consultation processes so that diverse views are heard and taken into account.

On 30 August 2017 I announced details of a deliberative democracy process to develop the ACT carers strategy. With Carers ACT, I called for participants from the Canberra community, including both carers and non-carers, to join the carers voice panel that will develop the strategy. The ACT government has committed in principle to accepting the vision, outcomes and priorities developed through this deliberative process.

The expression of interest process for the carers voice panel has now closed, with responses received from many Canberrans interested in participating. Invitations to participate were sent out to 64 Canberrans last week and two days of deliberations will take place in mid-October.

**MS CODY:** Minister, how can Canberrans be involved in this process?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** The carers voice panel participants are from both carer and non-carer backgrounds, as I mentioned, and are representative of our broader community and the many different types of carers that make such a valuable contribution to the lives of people in the ACT.

Participants in the carers voice panel will explore what better needs to be done to recognise and support carers in the important role they play in our community. In particular, participants will be asked to deliberate on what would make Canberra a carer-friendly city, what outcomes the community wants to see for carers and what the community's shared priorities should be.

In addition to the carers voice panel, Canberrans have had, and will have, a range of opportunities to be involved in the process to develop the ACT carers strategy. Members of the community can contribute through surveys or focus groups. Participants are asked to consider what actions they would like to see taken to support carers, what is working, and what they would like the panel formulating the strategy to know.

Canberrans are also encouraged to upload a short video of themselves answering the question, “If Canberra was a carer-friendly city, what would it look like?” These videos will help to inform the deliberations undertaken by the panel and additional policy work in the future.

After the panel has had its deliberations and established the vision, outcomes and priorities, there will be further consultations around the actions required to deliver on those objectives. Further information about participating in the development of the strategy is available on the carers strategy website or from Carers ACT.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what are the benefits of using a deliberative democracy process to develop the carer strategy?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. As we all know, Canberra is a diverse community, and this is also true of the carer community. There are around 46,000 unpaid carers in the ACT providing support to family members, friends or neighbours who are living with a disability, a physical or mental health condition, or are frail and aged. Carers also provide care to children and young people who are unable to live with their birth families.

We are using this deliberative democracy process because this is a meaningful way to ensure broad consultation, encourage informed policy development through enabling a deep dive by a representative group, and capture the views of people such as young carers whose voices may not be heard through more traditional consultation methods. This deliberative approach will bring together a range of viewpoints and perspectives from carers with their diverse circumstances and experiences and from the broader community.

I believe that engaging non-carers will have two important benefits. First, it acknowledges that any one of us could become a carer at any time, and enables consideration of what that would mean for someone who does not currently have caring responsibilities. How would their life change and who and what would they turn to for support? Second, I hope that non-carers will be able to think about how their workplaces, educational institutions and community groups can practically change to better engage carers, built on a deep understanding that comes from carers sharing their own experiences in the deliberative environment. This process will enable participants to explore in depth the complex issues around best supporting carers and to make considered recommendations.

Deliberative democracy processes embrace collective decision-making and support informed discussion, supporting participants to contribute to shared outcomes and ownership of work that will have a lasting impact.

### **Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—solids program**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, the solids program has been operating out of the Ngunnawal

Primary School to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youths to complete their education. It has run successfully for six years with one-off funding from the federal government's Indigenous advancement strategy but has attracted no support from your government and will close at the end of this year. Have you met with the leader of the program to discuss its future?

**MS BERRY:** No, I have not had a chance to meet with the coordinator of that program. I was initially advised through some fairly frustrated and angry tweets from the coordinator of that program about an indication that he had received from the Greens political party before the election last year that they were going to receive some funding. I have never had a conversation with them about that and I do not believe that the Labor Party did leading up to the election.

Because I had been contacted by Mr Bashford via some angry tweets on Twitter, I then got on to my office and said, "What's going on here? What's actually happening with this program?" The Education Directorate has never funded this program. We have attempted to meet with Mr Bashford. Initially he refused to meet with us. I understand that he is still having conversations with the Education Directorate, and we are trying to find a way forward. There are a number of programs that operate within our schools that are particularly targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. I would be happy to continue to engage with Mr Bashford if he were keen to engage with my office in a way other than via angry tweets over Twitter.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, what will you do to ensure that the program continues?

**MS BERRY:** There has never been a commitment for funding for that program.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, what will you do to support these students when the program closes at the end of this year?

**MS BERRY:** As I said, a number of programs have been operating in ACT schools for a number of years, including Ngunnawal culture programs that will be funded by the ACT government over the next couple of years. That operates across 15 schools, I understand. I also visited an after school program at Forrest, which is a program run by the Forrest Primary School community, the parents and children at that school, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to ensure that they are getting the same kinds of support that other children have, or more if they need it because of the different circumstances they are growing up with.

I will continue to invite Mr Bashford and the solids program to engage with the Education Directorate about the program, but the Education Directorate has never funded that program. I have never had the chance to have a conversation face to face with Mr Bashford about that program. At the moment, there is no funding to provide additional funding or to replace funding that has finished under the federal government.

## **Children and young people—privacy provisions**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, I refer to your statement last week that you are “not in a position to provide any information about the Bradyn Dillon matter” because of the “very strict privacy provisions under the Children and Young People Act”. I understand and respect these provisions. At the same time, Canberrans need to know what went wrong with this fundamental area of government. Minister, does information about specific actions taken by government agencies necessarily violate the privacy of protected individuals?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question but I think I have been pretty clear that in regard to the questions that have been asked in relation to child protection and in relation to the Bradyn Dillon matter which, again, is a very tragic case—and I extend the government’s condolences to Bradyn’s mother and family—we cannot, in line with the privacy provisions in the Children and Young People Act, make any specific comment in relation to that matter.

**Mrs Kikkert:** On a point of order, the question was: do specific actions taken by government agencies necessarily violate the privacy of protected individuals?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Kikkert, the standing orders ask ministers to be relevant but they cannot direct the minister how to answer the question. If the minister has further information to add to the answer—she has time left—she may. She has answered your question.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, when will the government release all information relating to the Bradyn Dillon matter that does not specifically violate privacy provisions?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I would note that any matter relating to child concern reports is considered to be sensitive information under the Children and Young People Act. That may be some additional information that is relevant to the broader context of Mrs Kikkert’s question. Mrs Kikkert is well aware that the tragic death of Bradyn Dillon was one of the incidents that resulted in the Glanfield inquiry being established. That inquiry report is public. It was released, along with a couple of other reports, and the government comprehensively responded to those three reports through the safer families package.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, what opportunities are there for the public to know that the government’s remedies are appropriate when you constantly refuse to provide any information at all about what went wrong?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Dunne for her supplementary question. As I have just said, the Glanfield inquiry was commissioned in part in response to this incident. The Glanfield inquiry examined very carefully the system-wide responses of the ACT government to family violence. The ACT government has responded with a very comprehensive package of support through the safer families package.

**Sport—participation**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the most recent participation rates for sport and recreation in the ACT and how this year's sport and recreation grants program will help increase participation further.

**MS BERRY:** The ACT has very strong participation rates. For example, for adults, 85.1 per cent participate in a physical or sporting activity once a week, compared to 79 per cent nationally. And 66.4 per cent participate at least three times a week, compared to 59 per cent nationally. For children, 74.1 per cent participated in a sport or physical activity outside of school hours in the past 12 months.

This year's sport and recreation grants program will provide a \$2.4 million investment into helping those numbers grow even further. The program will deliver funding across many operational needs and capital projects and will also deliver key parts of the ACT government's election platform, which included a new women's sport and recreation participation and leadership program, the new motor sports training and education program and funding and guidelines for the upgrade of sports amenities to be more inclusive and female friendly.

The Canberra community, through the government, makes a big annual investment in sport and recreation each year. I want to thank those sports that have stepped up strongly on gender equity, and I assure everyone of the ACT's commitment to continuing to achieve on this goal.

**MS ORR:** Minister, how does this grants announcement deliver on the government's election commitments in sport and recreation?

**MS BERRY:** I have mentioned the programs that will be delivered as part of the ACT government's election commitment last year, including \$500,000 for female-friendly infrastructure. Even before the election we started seeing the sports community along with designers, builders and planners responding to this commitment. Today I have released new guidelines to formalise best practice, and I expect that over the next four years the government will exceed its commitment on funding for projects which make facilities more inclusive and encourage more women and girls to engage and participate in sport.

The government committed \$400,000 for women's participation and leadership. This program will take shape through the course of many conversations with local sporting communities. The government has directed part of the funding into a competitive grants pool for this year, and will make further announcements around a new program soon.

There is also \$100,000 in grants for motorsport. This category responded to representation from different parts of Canberra's motorsport community, and I know that there was also very keen interest in this from Mr Gentleman. Work has also occurred on the commitment to match play lighting at the Calwell District Playing Fields under the sport and recreation grants program.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, how does the government recognise the sports leaders and community champions who do so much to promote inclusion, participation and excellence in sport and recreation?

**MS BERRY:** As members will know, the government last year held its inaugural CBR sport awards. More than 300 people came out to recognise our best, including Mr Milligan, who assured me that he was having a wonderful time and that it was a great event. I am sure that it will be a wonderful event again this year.

Of course, the success of that initiative really does depend on the community. Last year it responded amazingly in turning up and also with 40 nominations and a further four inductees into the ACT Sports Hall of Fame. It is important that we recognise the countless contributions to community sport and recreation which happen every day of the week in Canberra. I am sure that every member of the Assembly has a connection of some sort with local clubs in their neighbourhoods. It is important that each of us gives due recognition to the people who do so much for inclusion, health, equity and good fun in sports across the ACT.

### **Canberra Hospital—bed occupancy rates**

**MRS DUNNE:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to her answer to question on notice 358, which stated that the Canberra Hospital was over its 90 per cent optimum capacity every day between 1 July and 10 September this year. Minister, why was the Canberra Hospital over its 90 per cent optimum capacity every day during that period?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. As has been seen both in the ACT and nationally, it has been a very busy time for the hospital. Increases in presentations have obviously had an impact on occupancy. But I can assure the chamber, and indeed those opposite, and the broader community that people continued to receive excellent, high quality care at Canberra Hospital over that period.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, how often has the hospital been at 100 per cent capacity this winter, requiring patients being placed in beds in corridors rather than in wards?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** It is not always a measure around occupancy, depending on whether or not someone has perhaps been waiting temporarily in a place other than a ward or in a particular space in the emergency department. I will take the specifics of the question on notice.

**MS LEE:** Minister, is the Canberra Hospital still at over 90 per cent capacity today?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I am not sure as at today. As members would be aware, it changes very frequently because the hospital is a very busy place. In general, I cannot comment on that question right now, at 20 minutes past three. If the opposition wished to know the status of the occupancy rate in the hospital, I would be happy to provide the opposition, on notice, information on how many patients our terrific staff at Canberra Hospital have been seeing today, 20 September, and indeed what the occupancy level is for 20 September once 20 September has concluded.

## **ACT Policing—community engagement**

**MR STEEL:** My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, can you inform the Assembly what work ACT Policing undertakes to engage and educate the Canberra community?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Steel for his interest in community engagement across the ACT. ACT Policing's mission is to keep the peace and preserve public safety in the ACT, in partnership with the community of course. ACT Policing works closely with key stakeholders such as ACT government directorates, Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers on joint campaigns, events and public awareness messaging.

ACT Policing actively engages with the ACT community to share vital operational information and provide advice and information about personal safety and crime prevention. ACT Policing uses social media to communicate breaking news, incidents, crime in the community, and safety and security messages.

ACT Policing has more than 149,000 social media followers and has an active presence on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, where members of the community can keep up to date with all of the latest information. I have enjoyed in particular how ACT Policing uses humour to engage with young people and social media followers to get their important messages across.

ACT Policing also has a regular radio presence in Canberra. The coordinator of media and public engagement appears three times a week on 2CC to update the community on operational activity, public safety messaging and crime prevention. The Chief Police Officer, whom you met yesterday, Madam Speaker, also appears on ABC once a month to discuss ACT Policing and community safety matters.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, can you please provide further information about how ACT Policing engages with young people?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I want to congratulate Mr Steel on his engagement with youth across the ACT. Engaging with young people is a priority for ACT Policing and a personal interest for me as Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

I am pleased to advise that ACT Policing has recently engaged Noetic to conduct a youth survey and workshop. The goal of this work is to increase our understanding of the relationship between ACT young people and police, and ensure that it is increasingly positive.

The first phase was the dissemination of a survey to youth participants that sought information on how youth and police relate to each other, and how that relationship can be improved. I was pleased to attend a workshop on 7 August where young Canberrans and police sat down together to discuss the results of the survey and how we can achieve the best outcomes for both youth and police.

This work is continuing and the information already obtained will assist ACT Policing in better understanding the youth of today and how to strengthen the relationship between youth and police. For our younger citizens—

**Mr Hanson:** The youth of today, Mick!

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I reject the interjections from the older people on the other side.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I would if I were you, minister.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Of course, Constable Kenny Koala, who the opposition—

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A point of order?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I hesitate to do this, Madam Speaker but I really cannot hear Minister Gentleman at all.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** To order, members; to order. Minister, in conclusion?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I do want to thank Constable Kenny, and the constable, recently retired, who did that work for so many years. He was very successful. He started in the mid-70s, Madam Speaker. The 70s is a great time to remember. It is still a key community engagement tool for ACT Policing. In the past two years the program has attended—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, you will need to leave it there. Your time has expired.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, can you please tell the Assembly some of the events where members of the community can engage with ACT Policing?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** As I said at the beginning of the answer, I am pleased the police use humour to engage with the community. Where resources and operational priorities allow, the busy and dedicated members of ACT Policing can also be seen out and about talking with members of our community at community events. In the 2016-17 year, ACT Policing responded to 134 community requests which included open days, school fetes, community meetings and events.

ACT Policing attends major Canberra events such as the National Multicultural Festival, the Royal Canberra Show and the special children's Christmas party. ACT Policing is a proud participant in the Multicultural Festival and sees the festival as a key community engagement event, especially with the multicultural community. ACT Policing utilises the Canberra Show as a community engagement event focusing on the interactions with younger members of the community. Policing also has an operational presence at major events such as Skyfire, Floriade and Summernats where officers have the opportunity to positively engage with the community.

**Mr Barr:** Although all the world's a stage, for now I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

## **Supplementary answer to question without notice Public housing—Holder**

**MS BERRY:** I want to advise the Assembly that in respect of the development at Holder all of the trees will remain, subject to tree health, and that geotechnical surveys have commenced, but there has been no report produced yet.

## **Government—building materials policy**

**MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.25):** I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) for over a decade the ACT Government has been aware of the fire risks associated with aluminium cladding, as outlined in the Ministerial Statement of 17 August 2017, *Update on the Aluminium Cladding Working Group*;
- (b) since 2009, the ACT Government has been working on specific measures to address the fire safety risks associated with aluminium cladding;
- (c) in 2009-2010, the ACT Government approved aluminium cladding be used in the construction of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children;
- (d) in 2017, 10 years after monitoring the fire risks associated with aluminium cladding, the ACT Government commenced an audit of all ACT Government buildings constructed with this product;
- (e) the Government has refused leave to request the Minister table the audit of ACT Health government buildings;
- (f) the Minister for Planning and Land Management has failed to answer questions about the matter;
- (g) during question time on 13 September 2017, the Minister for Health and Wellbeing informed the Assembly that she has been advised by infrastructure experts at ACT Health and by ACT Fire and Rescue that the Centenary Hospital is safe and yet the Minister is having cladding from the hospital removed;
- (h) the Minister for Health and Wellbeing has refused to explain why the cladding is being removed;
- (i) the Senate Economics References Committee report states that there have been 19 fires involving aluminium cladding worldwide, including:

- (i) the 2014 Docklands fire in Melbourne that caused fire damage to approximately 140 apartments; and
  - (ii) the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire that destroyed 120 apartments and killed 80 people; and
  - (j) in September 2017, the Senate Economics References Committee recommended the Australian Government implement a total ban on the importation, sale and use of polyethylene core aluminium composite panels, also known as aluminium cladding, as a matter of urgency; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) advise the Assembly in the first week of the 2017 October sittings:
    - (i) what the Government has done to address the fire safety risks associated with the use of aluminium cladding in all ACT government buildings since 2009;
    - (ii) what the Government has done to address the fire safety risks associated with the use of aluminium cladding in all private commercial and residential buildings since 2009;
    - (iii) what issues were raised by ACT officials in 2009-10 with the Australian Building Codes Board;
    - (iv) why the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children was built with flammable aluminium cladding; and
    - (v) why cladding is being removed from the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children; and
  - (b) provide the Assembly in the first week of the 2017 October sittings:
    - (i) all reports on the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children by ACT Fire and Rescue;
    - (ii) the recommendations of the 2017 audit of all ACT Government health buildings constructed with aluminium cladding;
    - (iii) the audit report of ACT government buildings; and
    - (iv) the Government's plans to mitigate fire risks and related security issues associated with existing aluminium cladding on all ACT government, private commercial and residential buildings following the interim Senate Economics References Committee report on aluminium composite cladding.

We have had a lot of debate over the past few weeks about flammable aluminium cladding. It is important to note right from the outset that not all aluminium cladding is dangerous. There is a particular type that is more flammable—in fact, highly flammable—than other types. It generally involves a sandwich of aluminium with polyethylene on the inside. This is the one that we have seen, for example, to be the cause of a tragic fire at Grenfell tower in London.

The course of the debate over the past few weeks has led to the need for a motion because this ACT Labor-Greens government has, once again, demonstrated its contempt for the people of Canberra by neglecting basic safety and failing to monitor the use of aluminium cladding on buildings in the ACT.

It is hard to understand why, when there has been such an awareness of fire risks posed by this particular type of cladding for quite a number of years, the ACT Labor-Green government has chosen to continue to install some of this cladding on to their own buildings. The time has come when the government needs to be open and transparent and tell the people of Canberra what the government knew, when it knew it, and why the flammable aluminium cladding was approved, given that the government was already aware of the fire risks for some ACT government buildings. This government should be up front about the risks and what it is doing about them.

In his ministerial statement of 17 August this year, the minister stated that the ACT government has been “actively monitoring the use of aluminium cladding for over a decade”. However, the minister could not tell Canberrans in that statement why it would be monitoring the use of the cladding, how he had been monitoring the use of cladding and what the ACT government may have been doing with the monitoring.

I imagine that if the minister could tell us these things, the ACT government would have had the foresight to ensure that any hospital planned for women and children would not have been built with this cladding. Of course I am referring to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children where it has already been confirmed that 10 to 15 per cent of the exterior cladding is of this particular type of highly flammable cladding.

The minister also told us in his statement of 17 August that:

Since 2009 the ACT government has been working on specific measures to address the fire safety risks associated with external wall cladding.

If that is the case, why does the ACT government find itself suddenly undertaking an urgent audit of aluminium cladding on all ACT government buildings? What exactly has it been doing since 2009 if all of a sudden it now has to undertake an urgent audit?

Back in 2009-10 ACT officials raised the issue of external flammable wall cladding with other jurisdictions nationally through the Australian Building Codes Board. That was according to Mr Gentleman’s statement on 17 August. The government did not say what issues were raised or what the ACT government did to address awareness and compliance in the ACT following on from that. What did the ACT government do to proactively address their concerns at a local level? As we all know, compliance is the responsibility of the ACT government.

Why did it take a terrible, tragic 2017 fire to mobilise the ACT Labor-Greens government suddenly into urgent action? What has been happening since the 2014 fire at Docklands in Melbourne or the many other fires attributed to aluminium cladding?

Why has it taken so long to conduct an audit of ACT government buildings? Why is it not possible to do it more quickly, given that the government is, itself, the holder of all of that building information? Why has it taken so long to undertake a risk assessment when, in the minister's own words, "The government has actively monitored fire risks associated with aluminium cladding since around 2007."

The government also said:

Since 2009 ACT Fire & Rescue has checked all plans for new ACT buildings, excluding houses, with a floor area greater than 500 square metres to help ensure ... compliance ...

How then have some buildings continued to use this cladding? On 12 July 2017 I sent an email to Minister Gentleman asking 23 questions. To date, I have not received a response to the questions in that email of 12 July on the membership of the working group, the terms of reference, the duration of the working group and whether the report will be made public.

In his statement on 17 August the minister said:

... the ACT government is committed to investigating the use of aluminium composite panels in Canberra ...

Does that mean that they were not committed a decade ago when the issues first arose, or in 2009 or 2014 with the fires in Melbourne? Why are we suddenly committed to something we have known about for such a long time?

It is not often I find myself agreeing with Unions ACT. In fact, I could probably list the number of times I agree with them on the fingers of one hand. They have called for an audit of cladding specifically on Canberra's privately-owned buildings. They have also called for the creation of a public register of all buildings.

Again, I am unsure how it is possible that we cannot have this information already, given the building registers for everything you have to do: for development applications, for certificates of occupancy, for all of the inspections that must take place. There must already exist this type of information. Yet suddenly it is an urgent matter that the government has to undertake.

I go back to Minister Gentleman's statement. He said:

Since 2009 ACT Fire & Rescue has checked all plans for new ACT buildings, excluding houses, with a floor area greater than 500 square metres to help ensure NCC compliance of wall claddings, amongst other fire safety requirements.

How then was the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children built using aluminium cladding of this type? What mitigations were put in place for high fire risks when the switchboard at the Canberra Hospital caught fire? This is building infrastructure that we already know is ageing. There has already been a fire at the hospital this year. Yet that cladding remains.

The minister for health has stressed on many occasions that the cladding is safe. Why, then, is it being removed? If it is safe, it could stay. If it has to be removed, it is probably not safe. You cannot have it both ways. If the cladding is safe, why does it have to be removed? I believe it should be removed, but the minister for health is trying to muddy the waters around this issue and has yet to provide a straight answer on the question when she keeps stressing that the cladding is safe.

The minister for health claims that it is not safe to remove the cladding without having replacement cladding at the ready. Why then has not replacement cladding been ordered? Last week we were told that replacement cladding has not yet been ordered. We know now from other jurisdictions that are moving with urgency that there is a nationwide and worldwide shortage of replacement cladding because of the demand.

I received informal reports from some engineers that aluminium cladding, where used for aesthetic purposes, must be placed on a sound structure and that the removal of that aluminium cladding would have no effect on the structural integrity of the building in the short term. Obviously, I am not a building expert, but we have yet to see reports from either minister explaining why the cladding cannot be removed in the interim. If it is so unsafe that it must be removed, why can it stay for who knows how long until replacement cladding is available?

The matters I raise today about the ACT government's poor form on the use of aluminium cladding in construction have some intersection with federal government responsibilities. Australia's national construction code is among the best and the strictest in the world and is determined by state, territory and commonwealth governments and by industry representatives. The states and territories then adopt the national construction code into law. The use of combustible cladding on multi-storey buildings is, to my understanding, against that code.

I have been advised by some of my federal colleagues that the matter here is a matter of non-compliance and that regulation and enforcement, of course, are the responsibility of the states and territories. What we have fallen down on here is regulation and enforcement. The commonwealth has no constitutional powers to ensure buildings are constructed according to the national construction code. I note that the Prime Minister has asked all states and territories to audit their buildings for combustible cladding to determine the extent of the problem, which the ACT government has said it is doing.

In this regard, a significant issue may be that most jurisdictions outsource their regulatory responsibilities to private certifiers. The compliance and enforcement systems may then vary. To address this, the federal government has appointed two independent experts recently to examine broader compliance and enforcement problems within the building and construction systems to determine best-practice regulation.

Mr Assistant Speaker, earlier this month the Senate economics references committee produced a draft report that recommended that the Australian government implement a total ban on the importation, sale and use of polyethylene core aluminium composite panels—what I have been referring to as aluminium cladding—as a matter of urgency.

These materials are used in all sorts of applications, for example, signage, and some of the materials are made in Australia. There are a lot of other products that are also combustible that should not be put on the outside of multi-storey buildings, for example, timber. We are not going to ban all timber production or importation either. But what we are asking for is something that this government has already said last week it would do in responses to questions without notice. It said that all we had to do was ask for these reports.

We are asking what the government has done to address the fire safety risks associated with the use of aluminium cladding in all ACT government buildings since 2009; what it has done to address the fire safety risks associated with the use of aluminium cladding in all private, commercial and residential buildings since 2009; what issues have been raised by ACT officials since 2009-10 with the Australian Building Codes Board; why the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children was built with flammable aluminium cladding; why cladding is not being removed from the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children if it is safe.

I am also asking the government to provide to the Assembly, by the first week of the October sitting, all reports on the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children by ACT Fire & Rescue; the recommendations of the 2017 audit of all ACT government health buildings constructed that may have any part of aluminium cladding; a tabled the audit report of ACT government buildings; and the government's plans to mitigate fire risks and related security issues associated with the existing aluminium cladding on all ACT government, private, commercial and residential buildings following the interim Senate economics references committee report on aluminium composite cladding. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**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) (3.40): I thank Ms Lawder for this motion. I will not be supporting the motion, but I do agree that it is an important public safety issue so I want to move some amendments to the motion that will bring about similar actions. I move:

Omits paragraphs (1) and (2), substitute:

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the safety of Canberrans, whether they are at work or at home, is always the utmost priority for the ACT Government. This is why we have a strong focus on both stringent building regulation and investing in our emergency services;
- (b) the protection of building occupants from building fires is mainly regulated through building laws that rely on compliance with the National Construction Code (the NCC);
- (c) the NCC does not ‘ban’ particular products. Whether a product with a degree of combustibility can be used depends on where it will be located and what it will be used for;

- (d) aluminium composite panels are not prohibited. There is a large variety of panels available for different uses. There are some aluminium cladding products that meet combustibility limitations or performance standards for higher risk buildings and others that do not;
- (e) buildings that comply with the NCC provide minimal risk to occupants, and Canberra building standards require a high level of fire safety;
- (f) the ACT Government's concerns, initially raised in 2009 and 2010, were about the risks posed from the material being used in a non-compliant way that is not compliant with fire safety standards. The use of the material in other applications does not in, and of itself, pose an undue danger to the building occupants or the public;
- (g) the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is safe and has been recently inspected and tested by the ACT Fire Brigade;
- (h) the ACT Government has formed a working group, including representatives from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, the Emergency Services Agency and Access Canberra, to coordinate work to identify and address buildings that are at a high risk from combustible cladding;
- (i) Members of the Assembly have been advised during the 2017 August sittings of the additional precautionary measures taken by ACT Health to proactively ensure appropriate and adequate emergency management protocols at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children;
- (j) at the time of construction of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children:
  - (i) the design and construction of the building was inspected by the ACT Fire Brigade; and
  - (ii) the Centenary Hospital received both endorsement of the fire engineering brief by the ACT Fire Brigade as well as a final Certificate of Occupancy and Use;
- (k) following an ACT Health desktop audit and subsequent assessment by DeFire in 2017, the aluminium composite panels at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children will be removed as a precautionary measure as soon as practicable;
- (l) preliminary planning for remediation works to affected parts of the Centenary Hospital is currently underway, noting the high demand for materials and workforce Australia-wide;
- (m) the Senate Economics References Committee report states that there have been 19 fires involving aluminium cladding worldwide, including:
  - (i) the 2014 Docklands fire in Melbourne that caused fire damage to approximately 140 apartments; and

- (ii) the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire that destroyed 120 apartments and killed 80 people; and
  - (n) in September 2017, the Senate Economics References Committee recommended the Australian Government implement a total ban on the importation, sale and use of polyethylene core aluminium composite panels, also known as aluminium cladding, as a matter of urgency; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to provide the Assembly in the first week of the October 2017 sittings:
- (a) an update on planning and works to remove and replace aluminium composite panels at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children;
  - (b) a list of ACT Health buildings assessed for aluminium composite cladding and the findings of the ACT Health desktop audit;
  - (c) a copy of the Report ‘Combustible facade cladding—preliminary fire safety assessment ACT Health Procurement and Capital Works Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, Garran, ACT CA 170095’;
  - (d) an update on the audit of ACT Government buildings, including findings to date; and
  - (e) a report on issues raised by the ACT Government in 2009-2010 relating to the non-compliant use of aluminium composite panels and how the ACT Government ensures the fire safety of all buildings.”.

I propose to update the Assembly in the October sittings on a range of matters outlined in my amendments, including fire safety in ACT buildings. In the interim, I would like to take some time today to outline the types of products being discussed, relative safety risks and the processes already in place under the ACT building law to manage them. It is important, of course, in any debate that there is a good understanding of what the issues and associated risks are.

There are different types of cladding materials that include aluminium, and Ms Lawder has mentioned some of those here this afternoon. There is simple aluminium cladding, made up of only aluminium. This is not the material that has been the subject of recent media and reviews. There are also aluminium composite panels, which I will simply refer to as ACPs throughout my speech. These panels consist of two thin-coated aluminium sheets bonded to a non-aluminium core. There is a range of different cores. One of the most common types includes a mix of low-density polyethylene, PE, and mineral material to increase fire resistance. Different types of core, and different mixes of PE and mineral material, have different fire resistance properties. That is why some types of panels can be used in some circumstances and not in others.

Not all panels pose a risk to occupants or are unlawfully installed. The fire safety risks that we have been aware of and have alerted industry to over the years are not about all types of panels in every possible use. The risks are specifically about the non-compliant use of panels—that is, where they are not compliant with fire safety standards.

I understand that some of the footage we have seen of combustibility tests of panels and building fires could look alarming. But, like many materials, the use of such panels where they are compliant does not pose a danger to the building occupants or the public. For instance, using PE panels to make a sign or a shed is not the same as using PE panels to line the walls of a high-rise building. There are different risks.

Building standards are based on these different levels of risk. Compliant buildings provide minimal risk to occupants in a building fire and allow them to safely evacuate the building. In my previous example, evacuating a shed is relatively simple for occupants as there are no higher storeys for the fire to spread to. Evacuating a high-rise building is more difficult and takes longer. That is why the larger and more complex a building is, or the more difficult a building would be to evacuate in those circumstances, the greater is the fire protection the building requires. It is also why individual products, such as panels, are not banned under the national construction code.

To give another example of how this works, consider how this would apply to timber products. Ms Lawder raised this earlier. We use wood to make fires. Does this mean that we should ban timber-framed houses or timber cladding? No; of course not. Building standards to construct or clad a public building require timber to have different properties and meet higher standards than the timbers used in a single house. This is because they are different buildings and there are different risks that need to be addressed.

Mr Assistant Speaker, we have safety standards to protect the public. If a building complies with those standards, it poses a low risk to occupants. There can be some confusion about who approves buildings against building standards and the difference between the development approval and building approval processes. Compliance with building standards is managed under the Building Act. It outlines the process of building work to be approved, inspected and certified in the ACT. Compliance with the building code and Building Act is not assessed at the development approval stage; a development approval, DA, confirms compliance with planning requirements under the Planning and Development Act.

The notice of decision for each DA reminds proponents that the DA is not an approval under all territory laws and that the development must also comply with other relevant laws, including the building code and Building Act. However, a DA assessment will encompass whether a building has been designed appropriately, for example that a multistorey building has been designed with adequate fire escapes.

Compliance with the detailed fire safety standards in the building code are assessed at the building approval stage. Before most new buildings are built, the owner must get a building approval. Building approvals are issued by private building certifiers. To get the approval, they must provide enough information to the certifier to determine whether the building would comply with the Building Act, including any relevant building standards.

All applications for new buildings, or a new part of buildings over 500 square metres in floor area, excluding houses, townhouses and some outbuildings, must be referred to ACT Fire & Rescue. Any proposed alternative solution relating to fire protection must also be referred. An alternative solution is one that is outlined in the building standards, but can still meet the overall level of safety required, such as minimising the risk of spreading fire to a neighbouring building.

Replacement of external materials requires a building approval, but does not necessarily require a referral to ACT Fire & Rescue. While ACT Fire & Rescue do not approve buildings, they do provide advice to certifiers and applicants on any fire safety aspect of the building that may prevent emergency services personnel carrying out their own duties and services.

Since 2009, ACT Fire & Rescue has ensured that any proposals to use panels that do not meet the testing standards in a higher risk building are subject to an alternative solution. Alternative solutions are developed for specific buildings and must be accompanied by information that demonstrates the required level of safety. Alternative solutions are assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the design, purpose and intended use of the panels, as well as the building and the risks to occupants. The fire safety system for the building as a whole is also considered, including whether there are relevant protections like fire isolated stairs; isolating different parts of the building to prevent the spread of fire; fire suppression and sprinkler systems; and air handling and zone pressurisation systems. The certifier must be satisfied that the alternative solution will be compliant.

Building certifiers and fire engineers operating in the ACT have been made aware of when ACPs can be used and when they cannot. On completion of the project, the building certifier must also provide the supporting documentation received from the builder and others during construction. This may include installation certificates outlining the products installed in the building. The licensed builder is responsible for ensuring that materials and building work comply with the building approval.

Government buildings are not exempt from the Building Act. They are also subject to these approval and certification processes.

I am happy to provide more detail on fire safety standards and mitigating fire safety risks to the Assembly, as outlined in my amendments.

Mr Assistant Speaker, the building approval process exists to identify incorrectly specified or potentially non-compliant use of panels before the building is built. However, it cannot guarantee that the building was built in accordance with the building standards. In instances where an owner, tenant or government becomes aware that a building is not built in accordance with the building standards, the government can take action.

This is why we have formed the working group to review the potentially non-compliant use of cladding in ACT buildings. ACT government directorates are also reviewing and auditing the buildings we own and/or occupy. Directorates are expediting the work, but it is important that this is done right and that any potential compliance issues are verified and supported by expert advice.

We agree with the need to keep the public informed. It is also critical that we do not stigmatise buildings, have them labelled as unsafe or cause unnecessary public concern just because the building may have some form of panel as part of the wall or attachment. As I have mentioned, this does not mean the building is unsafe. Panel and other fire protection measures may well be compliant and fit for their purpose. The government will provide an update to this Assembly in October about the progress of this work on government buildings and the findings to date.

The recommendation in the Senate Economics Reference Committee's interim report on aluminium composite cladding to ban the import and all use of panels in Australia has been raised by the opposition. An import ban can only be imposed by the Australian government. Banning or restricting the use of one product is not without risk and would need to be carefully thought through so that it does not create an immediate switch to other products that could pose an equal or greater risk.

Ms Lawder made some comments in relation to her request to my office on the 12th in regard to aluminium cladding panels. There were some 23 components to that email. She may not be happy with the response that I provided, but I did provide a response. Contrary to her comments today, I did reply to Ms Lawder. The reply did not answer each of the 23 components in turn; however, it did respond to the issue of cladding in as much detail as could be provided at that point in time, noting that when the reply was sent, the government was still in the process of setting up the cross-directorate working group.

In my response to Ms Lawder I said that the community would be kept informed of the working group, which I have done, as evidenced by my ministerial statement to the Assembly on 17 August. I will continue, as I have said, to provide updates to the community on this important matter. I look forward to continuing to discuss the work together on improving building safety in the ACT and at the national level, and I look forward to updating the Assembly at the next sitting.

**MRS DUNNE** (Ginninderra) (3.52): For any member of the public listening to Mr Gentleman, I think that the net result would be one of confusion. There were a lot of words, but the overall feeling is that there is a lot of skirting around of the issues. We still have not addressed the substantive issue raised in Ms Lawder's motion: if we have known about this issue since 2009, why are we in a situation where we need to conduct an audit now and why do we not have this information already? And if this has been the case since 2009, how is it that a recently completed building, which, according to everybody, has received a certificate of occupancy and therefore should be in compliance with the building code, suddenly needs to have what appear to be non-compliant panels removed as a matter of safety?

My particular interest has been in relation to the buildings associated with the health portfolio. I am glad to see that now the government, through its amendment, is proposing to report upon the health portfolio buildings. But it is not satisfactory: neither this minister nor the health minister has satisfactorily answered the questions about the women's and children's hospital. Mr Gentleman spoke on a number of

occasions in his remarks about the potentially non-compliant use of ACPs. My question, and I would encourage members to give Mr Gentleman leave to address this issue in this debate, is: are the panels on the women's and children's hospital non-compliant? Yes or no? Were they installed in accordance with the building code?

We have had mixed messages. Ms Lawder has touched on this, and I have been quite fascinated, over the weeks, by the squirming from the minister for health. She gets quite indignant. "How dare you say such things? The women's and children's hospital is perfectly safe," she keeps telling us. The amendment today tells us the same thing, that the women's and children's hospital is perfectly safe.

I will repeat Ms Lawder's question, because it is a very valid one and the minister has not answered it. If it is safe, why do we need to remove the panels? If we need to remove the panels, how safe is the building? It is not perfectly safe if we have a need to remove the panels. And there seems to be no debate about that; everyone has said that we need to remove the panels.

The minister cannot have it both ways. It is either a safe building, and we are removing the panels for no purpose, or we need to remove the panels and that is because we have made an assessment that the building is not safe.

Let us be honest. That does not mean that we have to run round like headless chooks saying that the place is going to burn down tomorrow. That is obviously not the case. The minister said in her statement back in August that when they discovered this they augmented fire safety in the building. But the minister has not explained to us what those augmented fire safety measures are. It would be useful if the minister did that at some time, and this sounds as though it might be a really good time to do it.

I congratulate Ms Lawder for bringing this motion here today, and I congratulate Ms Lawder on her leadership on this issue. It is not just a health issue; it is an issue for the safety of all buildings in the ACT that have been built in recent years. It is very important that we are as up to date as possible, and that we are as truthful and open as possible.

Let us not prevaricate and have two bob each way: "The building is not safe but I cannot possibly say that; I cannot possibly lose face. Therefore I will assure people that it is safe when it clearly is not." If it clearly is safe, come in here and say, "We have reconsidered the issue. We do not need to take the panelling down."

Both the statements made by the minister cannot be held to be true at the same time. I want both ministers to be absolutely clear with the people of the ACT as to what the risks are. Were the five to 10 per cent of the panels on the women's and children's hospital installed in a non-compliant way? Is that the thing that makes them unsafe? And how do we rectify that, if that is the case, in relation to the women's and children's hospital?

I note the points that have been made by Ms Lawder. Like Ms Lawder, I am not a building expert; I am just the daughter and mother of carpenters. I know a bit about

building, but I do not know very much about high-rise buildings, and I am not an expert. We need assurance from the experts about how this matter will be rectified, why we cannot take the panels off at the moment, and why we have not ordered the panels. If we know that we have five per cent or 10 per cent of the building that needs to be rectified, we know how many panels that is and we can put in an order for the panels now. We should have done it in August, rather than waiting until September, October or November to work out the way forward and then put in the order, putting us farther down the list of people who are waiting for supply.

We could have acted earlier in relation to the cladding on the women's and children's hospital. We have a fair idea how much it is. You can over-order if you need to: if it is an issue of public safety, over-order if you need to. Like everything this government does, it is done in a hashed together way, completely lacking in clarity. The minister's statements today are completely lacking in clarity. There is a fair amount of shoving here—

*Mr Gentleman interjecting—*

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, I do understand the fair amount, but what you were doing today, minister, through you, Mr Assistant Speaker, was saying, “This is the responsibility of the commonwealth, this is the responsibility of the builder, and this is the responsibility of the building inspector. Don't blame Mick Gentleman.” At the same time, he wants to say, “I was across this issue from 2009.” You cannot have it both ways. You cannot be totally across the issue and then sheet home the blame to everybody but you.

That is what this government do on a consistent basis. They speak doublespeak. We have had a great example of doublespeak here today from Mr Gentleman in the same way as we have had it from the minister for health. What we want, what Ms Lawder is calling for in this motion, is clarity and the bright sunshine of truth.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (3.59): I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this matter today and also to hear the further discussion points that have come up. On behalf of the Greens I will actually be supporting Minister Gentleman's amendment to this motion but I am pleased that, through that amendment, the government has committed to provide the Assembly with its independent advice and reports in relation to the cladding at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

There is no doubt that the safety of patients in our public hospitals and all people across the ACT is a very serious matter. Of course, this issue has come to the fore following a fire at Grenfell tower in London earlier this year. The scale and devastating impact of that fire has prompted governments across Australia, and indeed around the world, to review the safety of their buildings, particularly those that are built with aluminium composite panels with a polyethylene core.

Following the Grenfell tower fire, the ACT government established a working group to investigate the use of aluminium cladding in Canberra buildings and assess any risk of potential structural fires. As the minister for planning noted in an update to this

Assembly, fire safety cannot be determined solely on the presence of aluminium cladding, as the building materials are just one of the factors which contribute to the overall fire risk.

Other factors which are also important include building height, the position and number of exits, access and egress, the type and vulnerability of tenants and the presence of sprinkler systems, smoke detectors and fire alarms. I think that is very important at this point in the context of some of the semantics we are hearing from the opposition around what words the ministers have used. For me, a really important part of this story is that no single factor determines the fire safety of a building. I will come back to that later but I think it is important that we actually think about that whole perspective when it comes to the relative fire risk of a building.

That point around other factors is why the National Construction Code, or the NCC, which regulates building construction across the territory, does not ban particular building products. Instead, the risk a product poses is determined based on where it will be located and what it will be used for, and Minister Gentleman has made some comments to that end today. The NCC is written into ACT law through the Building Act 2004 which requires that all new buildings and new building work must comply with the fire safety requirements outlined in the code.

It is also important to note that aluminium composite panels can be manufactured with a variety of different core materials ranging from highly combustible to non-combustible varieties. Therefore the presence of aluminium cladding alone does not indicate that a building is not conforming to combustibility limitations and performance standards as set out in the NCC.

The recent Senate committee inquiry into non-conforming building products found that under the current NCC there are compliant uses for aluminium composite panels with a polyethylene core. It was the committee's recommendation that, in light of the tragic outcomes of the Grenfell tower fire, these panels should not be considered as a legitimate building material and should be banned into the future.

Here in the territory, the government first raised concerns about the use of aluminium composite panels in 2009-10, though these concerns related to these materials being used in a non-compliant manner. In contrast with these previous issues, as Minister Fitzharris has said on a number of occasions, the aluminium composite panels at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children were compliant with the requirements of the NCC at the time of construction. There is no question about the compliance of the materials or the way they were applied to the building in that contemporary sense.

ACT Health has also been proactive in its work to assess any risk resulting from the use of these panels across its facilities by undertaking a desktop audit as well as seeking a subsequent external assessment. I understand that the minister made the decision following these reviews to remove the panels at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children as a precautionary measure. I think this is an entirely reasonable and appropriate response. The ACT has been aware of this issue and has undertaken the appropriate assessment over recent years.

The construction of the new Centenary hospital buildings was always compliant with the relevant national standards and was certified and tested by the ACT fire brigade but, in light of changing circumstances and with new evidence having been presented to ACT Health and through the recent Senate inquiry, Minister Fitzharris has taken what I think is the right and additional step of committing to replace the panels at the Centenary hospital as a precaution. This will occur in a time frame that is practical and in a way that does not create any additional risk to the structure of that building. That goes to the point that I have heard some suggest the panels should just be pulled off right now—and I am sure the minister will speak to this when she does speak—but I do not think that an appropriate solution is to just pull them off without having replacement panels ready.

For those reasons that I have outlined in my comments, the Greens believe that the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is safe, and we are confident the government has been actively ensuring that any risks from aluminium cladding in buildings across the territory is assessed and responded to.

We will be supporting the government's amendment to this motion and believe that the information provided under clause 2 provides greater transparency and reassurance for Canberrans around how and why these decisions were made and advice that informed them.

On that point, I think it is also important that we do call out the tactics that have been used by the opposition, and I have seen it in some media commentary in relation to this issue over recent weeks. Certainly I think the opposition has tried to position this as some sort of scare campaign, suggesting that Canberrans are not safe at the Centenary hospital. I have seen no evidence to support that assertion. I think it is unfortunate. I think it is poor judgement, that there seems to be a desire to generate some fear about this in our community to advance what can only be some sort of political agenda, and I condemn that strategy.

You cannot come in here and suggest that the Centenary hospital is some sort of fire trap. And that has very much been the tone of some of the lines of questioning in this place.

I think the minister has been quite clear on the reasons why the composite panelling needs to be removed. New information has identified that it can enhance fire risk. But the minister has been very clear in making the point that the Centenary hospital has a range of other fire protection measures, and that has been detailed in the comments that Minister Gentleman has made today. I have heard the minister make those points in question time and in media comments. I think we need to be realistic about what the issue is here, and that is why I think the response is appropriate.

Concerns have been raised about this cladding, and it is prudent to remove it because, as best I understand it, it can accelerate a fire once it occurs. I go back to the comments I made. The fire rating of a building goes to a whole lot of factors and materials that are used, how they are positioned, near exits and the like. So I think it is entirely consistent to be able to say, "This is quite a safe building."

Compared to a building that was built 40 years ago, of course it is a safe building. There are much better sprinkler systems. There is a range of other fire protections that now exist that make this a safe structure. That is not to say improvements cannot be made, and I think we need to be a little more nuanced in this discussion in understanding the difference between suggesting something is a fire trap and suggesting that improvements can be made to improve its fire safety.

I welcome the amendment that has been moved by Minister Gentleman and the commitment in that to providing further information to the Assembly. The Greens certainly look forward to seeing that information presented during the October sitting. I think that it is appropriate that that information is presented, and that is why we will support the amendment.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (4.08): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue today in the Assembly, and I, too, will be supporting Minister Gentleman's amendment. As I have stated on a number of occasions—and I actually look forward to again repeating comments that I have made that address both Ms Lawder's motion and subsequent points in her speech—the number one priority of government is to make sure our community is safe and well. In my case as the health minister I take it very seriously, particularly when we are talking about a hospital.

I take this opportunity to again reassure the Assembly and the community that there is no risk to patients, community or staff at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children from the cladding we are discussing today. I state again that the Centenary hospital is a safe hospital. Following the Grenfell tower block fire in London, ACT Health has been proactive in investigating any potential impact on its facilities.

At the time of construction of the Centenary hospital, those particular aluminium composite panels on the facade of the building met the requirements of the Building Code. So I can answer Mrs Dunne's question, once again, that, indeed, the Centenary hospital was built to code, and I understand that it remains code compliant. At the time of construction, they were applied to the building in a compliant way in accordance with the Building Code of Australia requirements. The design and construction of the building were reviewed by ACT Fire & Rescue, and the Centenary hospital received both the endorsement of ACT Fire & Rescue as well as final certificates of occupancy and use.

ACT Health were first made aware of the risks posed by the cladding at the Centenary hospital following a desktop audit conducted in June of this year on healthcare facilities constructed since 2008 and a subsequent assessment by DeFire in early August 2017. As I have previously advised members, the identified panels at the Centenary hospital will be removed as a precautionary measure as soon as practicable.

I once again reject the assertions made by the opposition that the Centenary hospital is unsafe. Yes, a decision has been made to remove the affected panels from the building.

However, I strongly emphasise that this is a precautionary measure. In fact, it demonstrates ACT Health's commitment to ensuring the safety of each and every one of the people who visit, stay or work in the facility, and it responds to incidents both nationally and internationally. Further, I again advise the Assembly that preliminary planning for remediation works to affected parts of the hospital is currently underway.

I also take the opportunity, as was noted, to remind members that there is high demand for both the relevant workforce and replacement materials. ACT Health, as I have said, are assessing the implications of early removal of those existing panels to determine if a short-term solution might be suitable prior to full cladding replacement while balancing the risk and impact of unintended consequences of early removal, such as building watertightness and warranty issues.

As I have previously advised the Assembly, these works are expected to commence later this year. Planning for remediation works will take into consideration—as the opposition are often very keen to remind us—the need for proper tender processes, statements of requirements, procurement of specialist services and products as well as subsequent building works. I note that both members of the opposition who have spoken to the motion said we should simply remove them and over order if we need to. That just demonstrates that they want to have it every which way possible when talking about their views on what the government should do and the way in which the government should approach these matters.

I have said repeatedly that I specifically asked ACT Health to advise by the end of September on the risks or otherwise of removing the panels before replacement panels are available. The opposition would be the first to weigh in with criticism if I required or demanded that ACT Health remove the panels and then found that there were risks which we had not considered. They would be the first to criticise me for making a poor decision without advice from experts. And I will not do that. I look forward to continuing to update the Assembly on progress of the removal of the cladding and confirming time frames for remediation.

As I have also advised the Assembly on a number of occasions, ACT Health has comprehensive safety measures and emergency procedures in place for the Centenary hospital together with a robust fire suppression system to respond to a fire emergency. I thank Mr Rattenbury for acknowledging that it has been mentioned on a number of occasions, but I am very happy to again mention it today. This includes: internal sprinklers throughout the building; fire drenches over windows within three metres of a fire compartment; passive fire and smoke compartments, for example, fire doors, spray fireproofing and ventilation shaft dampers; and, of course, smoke alarms, fire hose reels and fire extinguishers.

As previously stated, the facade cladding panels are decorative but have been installed above a galvanised steel, watertight and fire-rated membrane, which also complied with the relevant codes at the time of issue of the final certificates of occupancy and use. ACT Health also regularly conducts fire system checks on the Centenary hospital and is in regular contact with members of the ACT Emergency Services Agency and the Access Canberra building regulator. I can confirm that these agencies have

expressed no concerns about our ability to make sure that patients and staff are safe in this building. I again remind members that ACT Fire & Rescue have been on the public record saying the Centenary hospital is a safe building.

Since ACT Health became aware that the cladding contained this particular core following the Grenfell fire disaster, fire system testing has been increased. This additional testing regime will continue until the panels have been removed, and additional emergency response training has been provided to building wardens. Further training, including emergency drills, has been programmed to occur in the coming fortnight and thereafter on a regular basis.

It is certainly the case that ACT Health have responded exactly as any responsible minister would want them to respond, going the extra mile, particularly because this is a hospital. I am glad of the opportunity to once again reassure members and the community of ACT Health's proactive approach to managing this issue and that remediation works will be commencing in the near future.

I will also comment on what I agree with Minister Rattenbury were some highly irresponsible comments made by the opposition on this matter. Despite Mrs Dunne's extreme sophistry around some of this debate, I welcomed the fact that she did not want us running around like headless chooks whipping up alarm. Well, I take this opportunity to remind Mrs Dunne of comments Ms Lawder made about a month ago in a media statement that she made on this issue:

The ACT Government has potentially put the lives of Canberrans, including newborn babies, in danger ... we have learned that it could be on the verge of a massive fire disaster at any time.

If alarming and irresponsible and reckless comments have been made by a member of this place, those are they. They had serious potential to mislead the community and inappropriately influence the decisions of those in need of medical attention. I certainly look forward to Ms Lawder correcting the record and not doing as her colleague suggested and run around like a headless chook. If there was a definition of running around like a headless chook causing alarm in the community, it would be Ms Lawder's comments in August.

I hope this debate today reaffirms the utmost seriousness with which the government is taking this matter. It is taking the advice of experts, doing what governments do: appropriately and methodically responding to a very serious and important issue. I note we are ahead of most other jurisdictions in the country, noting that Queanbeyan hospital was identified just a couple of weeks ago as also containing this cladding. I commend ACT Health for the excellent work they have done on this, and I look forward to continuing to update the Assembly. I hope the opposition can agree to Mr Gentleman's amendments because they provide more information, which I have said all along I am very willing to do.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.18): This has been an excellent opportunity to gather a bit more information, which has previously been less than forthcoming, from the

government on this particular issue. I welcome for the most part most of Mr Gentleman's amendment with its calling on reports on the hospital and ACT government buildings to be made available. But I note that the amendment makes no reference to the commonwealth having no power to ensure that buildings are constructed according to the NCC or that regulation or enforcement is the responsibility of the states and territories.

Given our regulation and compliance regime, how can noncompliant use take place in the ACT? That question is very valid. As I stated earlier, the issue is noncompliance. And while I appreciate the minister's goodwill in providing many of the items that I have asked for, I am disappointed that the government will not advise of the plans to mitigate fire risks associated with this aluminium cladding or advise specifically why the cladding is being removed from the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children and will not provide the reports on the hospital by ACT Fire & Rescue.

Mr Gentleman said I had been asking for a ban. In actual fact, in my motion I noted that the Senate Economics References Committee recommended that the Australian government implement a total ban. I will read from a newspaper article from the *Canberra Times* of 6 September:

Parliament's Standing Committee on Economics called for an urgent national ban on the importation, sale and use of the dangerous polyethylene core aluminium composite panels, as well as for state and territory governments to establish a national licensing scheme for builders.

The committee, which has considered dangerous building products over three years and received more than 160 submissions, also called for beefed up penalties for breaches of the construction code and more funding for the Federal Safety Commissioner.

It said there had been extensive delays in the development and implementation of policies to address non-compliance and non-conformity in the building industry and long lag times in addressing a 2014 fire at Melbourne's Lacrosse residential tower.

Labor's spokesman on innovation, industry, science and research, Kim Carr, said the panels represented a fundamental failure of public safety akin to deadly asbestos.

I will just repeat that, Mr Assistant Speaker:

Labor's spokesman on innovation, industry, science and research, Kim Carr, said the panels represented a fundamental failure of public safety akin to deadly asbestos.

He blamed decades of deregulation and privatisation and said use of the cheaper, imported combustible products saved builders just \$3 per square metre.

I could go on. It is about compliance and regulation, which is the ACT government's responsibility.

Mr Rattenbury used the word, but he had a bit of hyperbole himself. He said I had referred to the building as a “fire trap”. I do not believe I have ever used that terminology, Mr Rattenbury. In fact, I regularly visit the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, which I would not be doing if I thought it was a fire trap. The question remains the same as it always has: if it is safe, why are we removing the panels from the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children? Both cannot be true. And additional emergency evacuation procedures do not make the building any safer either. It is good to see measures have been put in place in case of an unfortunate event, but that does not improve safety.

This ACT Labor-Greens government have demonstrated their contempt for the people of Canberra by failing to properly monitor the use of aluminium cladding on buildings in the ACT. It is hard to understand why the ACT Labor-Greens government have chosen to continue to install the highly combustible claddings onto their own buildings when, according to their own reports, they have known about these issues for the best part of a decade. The government should at last be open and transparent on this issue with the people of Canberra and be upfront about the risks and what they are doing about those risks. We will not be supporting the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12

Noes 9

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

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

### **Supplementary answer to question without notice Children and young people—privacy provisions**

**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) (4.28): I received a question in question time from Mrs Kikkert relating to the Bradyn Dillon matter. I was somewhat surprised to receive this question, as my office had emailed Mrs Kikkert on Friday, 8 September outlining the specific clauses in the Children and Young People Act of which I spoke. I will quote from that email:

Chapter 25 of the Children and Young People Act establishes a statutory regime to control the use and disclosure of information obtained in the course of exercising a function under the act. Personal information which relates to general functions is treated as protected information under the CYP Act. Where information relates to specific functions, such as child concern reports, care and protection appraisals, family group conferences or confidential reports of contraventions of the CYP Act, it is considered to be sensitive information under the CYP Act. Generally, it is an offence to share sensitive information (section 846).

Accordingly, my staff advised Mrs Kikkert's office: "Minister Stephen-Smith is unable to provide a briefing on specific cases as the disclosure of sensitive information would be an offence under the CYP Act."

My staff also advised Mrs Kikkert's office, for clarity, that legal proceedings in relation to the matter of the death of Bradyn Dillon have not concluded. While Mr Dillon has pleaded guilty in court recently, he is yet to be sentenced and the matter therefore remains *sub judice*—something, I forgot to mention in my response to questions. I therefore wish to draw Mrs Kikkert's attention to continuing resolution 10 of the Assembly, which states, among other things:

... the Assembly in all its proceedings ... shall apply the following rules on matters *sub judice*:

- (1) Cases in which proceedings are active in the courts shall not be referred to in any motion, debate or question.
  - (a) (i) Criminal proceedings cease to be active when they are concluded by verdict or sentence ...

I thought it would be helpful, given that we will have another question time tomorrow, to draw Mrs Kikkert's attention to these matters; and Mrs Dunne's attention, although I expect she would already be aware of these matters.

## **Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm**

**MR MILLIGAN** (Yerrabi) (4.31): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes:
  - (a) the ACT Labor-Greens' Government recently opened a property known as the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, which it has stated is not an alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility;
  - (b) that after years of effort and spending more than \$12 million, this property is now nothing more than a non-residential day program centre;

- (c) that the Government has come up with a model of service delivery suitable only for the final stages in the treatment of drug and alcohol dependency;
  - (d) that the model of service delivery for the property, whilst it employs Indigenous people, has failed to include any Indigenous organisations in its delivery;
  - (e) that the original intention of the Farm, as stated by Jon Stanhope in his press release of 13 October 2007, was for it to be a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility; and
  - (f) that the Farm does not meet the needs of the local community for an Indigenous drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility delivering a clinical model of care; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Labor Government to:
- (a) accept responsibility for failing to keep to the original commitment made on 13 October 2007 by the then Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, to develop a drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility; and
  - (b) detail how the Government will deliver on a drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation centre:
    - (i) as requested and needed by the ACT Indigenous community;
    - (ii) which provides an appropriate clinical model of care; and
    - (iii) which is run by Indigenous organisation/s.

The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm has been opened, or allegedly it has. I cannot confirm, because for some reason my name was not included on the invitation list for the opening. Twenty-four MLAs were invited and, unfortunately, my name was not on that list. The minister once again emphasised in a media release not long ago that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm would not be an alcohol and drug residential rehabilitation facility. In fact it will not even be a residential facility, with clients to be bussed in 30 minutes there, 30 minutes back from the Woden town centre every day. So, after more than 10 years of effort and spending more than \$12 million, the property is to become little more than what the community has called a glorified day camp, running a very expensive non-residential day program for people in the final stages of their drug and alcohol dependency recovery journey.

Ten years ago, when Jon Stanhope sent out a media release, on 13 October 2007, he promised the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community \$10.8 million for an Indigenous drug rehabilitation centre. The services to be provided there would fill a gap, he stated. It would be in line with the then government's determination to provide services which were culturally appropriate for the Indigenous community. Drug and alcohol abuse, he stated at the time, were complex health issues and social issues facing the Indigenous community. It had become clear to him that there was a

need for a range of culturally appropriate services and treatment options which reflected the complexity and maximised the chances of helping these individuals and families overcome substance abuse. The planned facility, a residential rehabilitation centre, would focus on taking a holistic approach, with therapeutic programs that would support those who needed the service through the rehabilitation and recovery process before making the transition back into their communities. It would link with existing services, including detoxification, diversion and existing methadone services.

The government committed \$10.8 million dollars in capital funding for the purchase of an appropriate property and the building of a 16-bed facility. When questioned about his intent, in a recent Winnunga newsletter Jon Stanhope advised that his intention was that the facility would be a drug and alcohol residential rehab centre as this was traditionally and commonly understood, that there was nothing ambiguous about his statement and that his press release and budget papers meant exactly what they said. Maybe this government failed to get the correct handover from the then Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, who, on releasing the design plans, affirmed her commitment to the facility for “ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people requiring alcohol and other drug rehabilitation”.

Ten years have gone by. In that time a suitable property was located. A purpose-built building was erected, though not with 16 beds as was originally planned. Only an eight-bed facility was eventually completed during that time. The land was cleared of asbestos, at more cost; the bridge was renewed, at more cost; a new access road was built, at more cost; and, because the government further delayed the opening, security had to be installed, at a further cost of \$400,000 a year—more costs. More than \$12 million has been spent. Ten years in the making, yet the Indigenous community still does not have a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre as originally intended.

We do not know exactly what it is, as a final model of care has not been released, but we do know from the minister’s press release that it is not an alternative to alcohol and other drug treatment. In the past few months the government has sought to deflect responsibility for its own shortcomings by insisting that the Aboriginal community was confused or had misunderstood the intended purpose of the facility. This simply inflamed the situation. But it would appear that from the outset the purpose was clear, as this property has always been referred to as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation service. In fact, in early 2016, Winnunga was approached by the Health Directorate to engage them in a single select tender process to develop a service delivery model of care for the facility. I have, of course, spoken on this previously but feel it bears repeating now.

In July 2016, ATODA and Winnunga were contracted and funded by ACT Health to prepare the model of care. The final model was submitted in October 2016. It was an evidence-based, robust proposal. At no time was there an understanding by Winnunga that the rehabilitation service to be delivered from the bush healing farm would include a detoxification component or methadone dosing on site. Clients who need this level of treatment were to be excluded and supported elsewhere. In their comprehensive 120-page model-of-care document, Winnunga outlined the mandatory specific eligibility for clients who could attend the facility. This was consistent with

the evidence for those for whom residential rehab is indicated. It also outlined the exclusions for treatment, to ensure that the best possible implementation and outcomes were achieved for all.

These exclusions included opioid maintenance therapy clients and clients whose behaviour presented an unacceptable management or safety risk within the bush healing farm context. Winnunga always had the best interests of their community uppermost in mind which is, of course, based on their extensive experience and expertise and long history of working with their community. But all of this is a moot point. We now have a facility that is not a drug and alcohol treatment facility, though we do not know yet what it is. What we do know is that the services to be provided there, although they may include Indigenous workers, do not currently include Indigenous organisations. Yet again, no local Indigenous people have been contracted directly to provide services to the Indigenous clients at the farm. Instead the government is running programs from the CIT, ACT Parks and Conservation, ACT Health and Nutrition Australia ACT. No doubt they are all worthwhile organisations but they fail the Indigenous test. They are not listed with ORIC and are not a Supply Nation member organisation.

Let us recap. We have a facility that is not a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, that is not residential, that has cost the government upwards of \$12 million, that does not have a service delivery model which is only suitable for the final stages in the treatment of drug and alcohol dependency recovery, and which has failed to include any Indigenous organisations. You may ask, "Having the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, is there still a need for anything further?" The answer is a very loud and clear yes: yes from the former Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, who stated very clearly that this was always intended and the needs of the community demanded it; yes from the CEO of Winnunga, who stated in her newsletter, "The need for an Indigenous drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility is nevertheless even greater now than it was in 2007"; and yes from Ross Fowler and Jo Chivers, ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body former chairman and deputy chairperson, who requested that the ACT government outline what it intended to do to provide an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation service in the ACT. He said, "What we want from the government on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is a commitment to a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility that provides the clinical services our community so desperately needs."

Why do you need such a service? Why is the need so great? There are currently only 105 residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds in Canberra, through Karralika Programs, Directions ACT, the Ted Noffs Foundation and the Salvation Army. None of these provides Indigenous specific or appropriate care and all of them are oversubscribed. The result has been that many patients, including Indigenous patients, have to travel interstate to seek care and support, away from their families, away from their community, away from their lands. For example, those wishing to seek Indigenous-specific treatment must travel to somewhere like Nowra, a six-hour return journey if family wish to visit. Ross Fowler stated, "This is not working."

So what do we need the government to do? We need them to accept responsibility for failing to keep the original commitment made on 13 October 2007 by the then Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, to develop a drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility. We need them to detail how they will deliver a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, committing to the construction and funding, as a matter of urgency, of an Indigenous drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility, a facility which has been requested and is much needed by the ACT Indigenous community, a facility that will provide an appropriate clinical model of care, and a facility which is run by Indigenous organisations for the Indigenous people of the ACT.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (4.41): I thank Mr Milligan for the opportunity to speak again about this subject today and to correct the record on a number of issues that Mr Milligan has raised. Members will see that in the amendment that has been circulated. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) the ACT Government recently opened the \$11.7 million Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, a place of healing which aims to address the root causes of alcohol and drug use;
- (b) the purpose of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is to provide an additional service to support a person’s recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction and the program will initially include life skills training, cultural programs, physical health and wellbeing programs and other activities;
- (c) the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm has opened using a staged approach and residential services will become available in future, with residential accommodation already built;
- (d) the suite of services currently offered allows clients to develop life skills to tackle the root causes of dependency and the ACT Government has committed to evolving the program over time;
- (e) the first program will operate for 10 weeks for up to 15 clients;
- (f) clients can be referred by ACT Health services, GPs and other private and non-government service providers; and
- (g) a Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm Advisory Board has guided the services available, and includes representation from the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) finalise the Cultural Healing Framework, in consultation with the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm Advisory Board, to establish principles that underpin the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm and the concepts of cultural healing;
- (b) ensure residential programs become available at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm in the future; and
- (c) consider revisiting permitted land uses for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm as part of a review of the program after 12 months of operation.”.

Firstly, I would like to say it is a surprise to me that Mr Milligan did not receive an invitation to the opening of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. I have followed up on that already. I of course apologise if that was not the case but he did note that every other member of the Assembly received that invitation. I certainly was advised that all members of the Assembly received the invitation to attend the opening of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, which is even more of a shame, because I think that Mr Milligan has one part of the picture here; but there are many parts of the picture. I am absolutely certain that the mood on the day, the welcome by many members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including those who have been advocates for this facility, those who are working there, those who are working in ACT Health who helped to shape this project, those who work in organisations which Mr Milligan came close to criticising and who are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans delivering services at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm was such that we might have avoided some of the confusion which is going to be revealed in my response to Mr Milligan’s motion.

He has indeed put forward a particular view that was the opposite of those who were at the opening of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. The opening was an event of excitement and optimism for the future, with some reflections of the sadness of the past that brought the community together to advocate for the farm in the first place. The conversations that took place were filled with recognition of how far the journey had come and how much possibility there was for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm to support people in the community.

If members opposite had had the opportunity to come along, they would have understood, as I did, what this project is about and what it means for many members of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Being part of the launch was a very humbling and moving experience. The opening was the culmination of many years of work and many conversations had with people who care deeply about the success of the bush healing farm and the impacts that it will have for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. The response from those present was one of elation and excitement.

The timing of this motion, I believe, is a bit disappointing as it comes at a time after I have also made a statement to the Assembly—I might stand corrected but I do not think Mr Milligan reflected on it really at any point—because a number of the claims that he made that I had not updated the Assembly on were indeed made in my statement to the Assembly during the last sitting.

But why it is also disappointing is that it is happening at a time when the first clients are actually undertaking the induction process to start receiving programs at the bush healing farm. It might have been preferable before debating today's motion for Mr Milligan to seek a briefing on this matter or reflect on my previous statements so that we could have at least had this debate from an informed position.

For the benefit of the Assembly, I will again state the government's intentions with the bush healing farm and the evidence and history which support the approach. To suggest that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is nothing more than a non-residential day program not only misrepresents the model and the government's intention but also fails to understand the philosophy of healing and its importance to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. To go back to my statement last week:

The work that will be done by the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is not only about the individual healing journey; it is also a statement about promoting and protecting the unique and diverse cultures of our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognising the importance that culture plays not only in the wellbeing of the community, but also of the individual.

I would encourage members to consider the approach being taken by the bush healing farm before dismissing it without a full understanding of the philosophy which lies behind it or the evidence which supports it or being present to hear those words come directly from the mouths of those who have advocated for it for so long. I will say again that there is growing evidence to support the approach being taken by the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm in tackling the many issues that are faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To quote the Healing Foundation:

Effective healing programs show positive impacts on individuals, families and communities in terms of self-worth and identity.

I would encourage all members to visit the Healing Foundation website and read the documentation for themselves. It is also worth noting that the former head of Queensland corrections, Mr Keith Hamburger, was quoted by both the *ABC* and *Guardian Australia* in June as saying that Australia needs more of these types of centres. These are just some examples from Australia but also there is strong evidence from around the globe, particularly from New Zealand and Canada, about the effectiveness of this kind of work.

This evidence and its effectiveness seem to have been ignored, and indeed the evidence supplied in support of this motion in its original form is an old press release. However, this press release is not quite as conclusive as to the intention of the bush healing farm as Mr Milligan might wish us to believe. To quote from the release, as per the motion:

This residential rehabilitation facility will take a holistic approach. The therapeutic program will support those who use the service through the rehabilitation and recovery process, and then help them make the transition back into the wider community.

This language indicates a model far closer to the government's approach to the bush healing farm than to the clinical model Mr Milligan appeared to outline. However, rather than debating the interpretation of a decade-old press release, it is perhaps better to use the words of the founding members of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. To quote from founding member and Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm Advisory Board Co-Chair Roslyn Brown, in her submission to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal on the intention of the farm:

It will not be a place to detoxify or provide medical treatment for drug and alcohol addiction ... we will be working towards healing the mind, body and soul and opening a new world view for our youth ... there will be a strong focus on Aboriginal spirituality, culture and principles through recreational pursuits.

Ms Brown has been involved in the bush healing farm for more than 15 years and is one of the people who brought this concept to Canberra. She also reiterated this original vision at the official opening and declared that the vision for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm remains intact. Ms Brown's comments both to ACAT and at the opening clearly reinforce the government's approach and what I have said previously in this place, that is, that it was never intended to be an alcohol or other drug clinical rehabilitation centre.

I acknowledge again, as I have said previously, that there have been ups and downs on the journey to the opening last week and that the government contributed to that confusion during the planning phase. I have on a number of occasions, and do so again, apologised to any members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who felt misled as a result. There was a recognition that things, as they are, are not working for many of our First Peoples and, much like other countries have done before us, we need to try something different.

The bush healing farm was always intended to address root cause issues that led to substance abuse and treatment relapses and to reconnect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to land and culture with the aim of assisting them to better respond to life's challenges.

I understand and accept that there are those in the community who have a different view about how the farm should be used. I understand that this is a new approach. However, it is one thing to discuss the broader needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, which I think we can all agree on, it is an entirely different one to discuss the historical intent of the farm. They are two distinct conversations, and we should not have them confused in this place by this motion.

It is not the government's intention that the bush healing farm be a solution to every problem. We recognise that the bush healing farm is part of a system of responses to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that the farm must work within that system, which is why we will continue to build the farm's relationship with the broader system.

A number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector organisations continue to participate on the advisory board and others have been involved in the past. Further, the original motion omitted the contribution of CIT's Yuruana Centre, a very highly regarded centre amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, which I remind Mr Milligan of, and the Aboriginal rangers of the healthy country program who will deliver a considerable portion of the program. These are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led services for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and I thank them for their strong commitment to the bush healing farm and for helping to deliver on the vision.

It is also important to remember the Ngunnawal elders and other community leaders and role models of the local community who will continue to play an active role with the bush healing farm and contribute heavily through yarning circles which will engage with clients.

Our staff in ACT Health in particular have made a significant contribution to the bush healing farm. It is a significant achievement that not only will this service be led by an Aboriginal staff member but that the majority of staff themselves identify as Aboriginal. This is a critical factor in making sure that the bush healing farm can deliver on its promise, and I invite Mr Milligan to reflect on his comments regarding the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the operations of the bush healing farm. I had the pleasure of speaking with some of those staff last week at the opening, and I thank them again for their enthusiasm and commitment to the bush healing farm. We look forward to having more involvement from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community sector services organisations and, indeed, we hope to engage with many other non-government organisations well into the future as we continue to evolve and expand the service.

However, to again be clear to the Assembly, ACT Health published a request for a proposal in late 2015 seeking interest among community sector organisations to operate the service in its entirety or form a consortium approach. Unfortunately, ACT Health did not receive any expressions of interest. This left the government in a difficult position but it was clear that the government needed to overcome this hurdle. The government chose to continue and did so by inviting a number of organisations to contribute to that discussion both through specific contracts to assist in the development of the farm and as members of the advisory board.

As time goes on and the farm continues to evolve, there will be further opportunities to involve other groups and organisations in the program. For example, I understand that Gugan Gulwan have been invited to come and visit the bush healing farm and have a discussion on how they might, both separately and in addition to the bush healing farm day program, use the facility to host some of their programs and events.

As I have said, we will build on this service, and this evolution will include a residential program. What this residential program looks like and when it will occur will depend on the evaluations the government conducts and the conversations it is having with other potential partners right now. As I said last week, we will learn from each iteration of the program and incorporate those learnings to continue to improve.

In closing, I really would like to make sure that we have a shared understanding of the objectives of the bush healing farm, and I offer Mr Milligan a briefing, which I understand he has not previously sought on this matter, to broaden his understanding of, as I have outlined in my speech today, the objectives of the farm and its operation. I would also just like to confirm that Health checked and they sent an email invitation but unfortunately, I gather, there was some difficulty with that. I apologise that it appears that he may not have received his specific invitation, and I do apologise for that.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (4.55): I would like to commend Mr Milligan for his diligence and commitment in his advocacy for Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ACT government has not met expectations with regard to the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. That is a fact. That is why the minister has apologised on several occasions, because the government created high expectations. They created a perception of what they were going to deliver. And the reality is that what has now been delivered is not what was originally flagged. The project has lacked coordination and, even now, years and many millions of dollars later, the government still have not delivered a service that was what they originally promised.

Earlier this year the minister tried to dance around the fact that it is not what they promised. And it is extraordinary that the government did not have a finalised model of care prepared months if not years ago rather than having to scramble at the last minute. We have asked questions on numerous occasions. Mr Milligan has asked many questions this year on this subject, and to think that a model of care has either only just been finalised or is still being finalised really is a reflection on just how poorly coordinated this project has been and the lack of leadership that successive ministers have demonstrated or have not demonstrated. They have had ample opportunity to get the work on this proposal done.

The delays and problems with the procurement, planning, decisions and construction meant that the government had plenty of time to get it right. They have had about 10 years, in fact, to get it right. Yet, a bit like a university assignment, it has come down to the night before and they are panicking.

The farce with this continued just a couple of weeks ago when invitations were hastily sent out and many members of the community who are obvious potential stakeholders could not attend because of the short notice. This is despite the fact that it has been 10 years in the making, and the invitations had to be scrambled. Everyone had to scramble to get the invitations out with five days notice. There is very little by way of what government has done with regard to this project that is redeeming, or befitting the Indigenous community that they are meant to be serving.

The Canberra Liberals support the need for a residential facility with a clinical model of care. Of course, this is easier said than done, and we are the first to admit that. However, the government has had 10 years to get this right. Delay after delay with regard to the construction and the various planning decisions and the procurement decisions should have at least meant that they were ready with regard to the model of care. But this has been on the backburner for a long time.

What we have now, it seems, is more of a drive-in, drive-out operation than what was actually promised some time ago. It is no wonder that so many people are disappointed. And it seems that Minister Fitzharris has learnt from Mr Barr a resentment for the Assembly, a resentment for motions and a resentment for questions, and there is a passive aggression that is demonstrated in her speeches. She repeatedly tries to patronise people. I think it is unbecoming of this place. I think the number of times that the minister mentioned Mr Milligan in her speech is indicative of the passive aggression.

Further to this, the cost of the project has been extraordinary. There is no doubt about that. To spend so much money on this project and still not deliver on the original expectation is pretty damning. It is an embarrassment. The opportunity cost in time and in money is enormous. If the original scope of the project was what is now being delivered, surely this could have been done years ago. Why did it take 10 years? It is not a residential facility. It has not got a clinical model of care. What has been the delay for 10 years? Why was this not done in a year or two? It really is an embarrassment and it is very disappointing, I know, for many in the Indigenous community.

The opposition, through this motion, is calling on the government to finally deliver on what they promised about a decade ago, and this should not be an unreasonable request.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (5.01): It was only a couple of months ago that we were having a very similar discussion in this place about the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. As I said at that time, this facility has been a long time coming and the process to get to this point has not been as smooth as it might have been. Everybody who has spoken today has made that observation in various ways. Representatives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community raised a number of completely valid frustrations, and Minister Fitzharris has rightly apologised for the confusion the government caused in relation to the purpose and scope of the facility. I think it is right that she did that, and I welcome the fact that she was very up front in making that apology.

Fast forward to last week and the minister announced to the Assembly that the bush healing farm has officially opened and will soon be providing care and support for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The bush healing farm has been described as a place of healing where people will feel safe and supported by their traditional custodians, community leaders, elders and respected role models. It is designed to help people make changes that can break the cycle of drug and alcohol dependency.

These are all important goals and the current model represents a starting point for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. However, it is also important to remember that the model of care can, and must, evolve over time to better meet the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The Greens believe it is encouraging that the model of care has tried to look beyond the traditional Western medical model of addiction by providing supports to look after cultural, spiritual and social wellbeing. This is an important recognition that social and cultural determinants—a term used to talk about the contextual factors that affect people’s lives—are crucial to improving health outcomes for all people. In particular, cultural determinants such as connection to country and historical discrimination have a significant impact on health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At the same time social and cultural determinants cannot be addressed in isolation. Programs to support social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing will be most effective if they are provided alongside traditional health services, not instead of them. We know that people who have experienced drug and alcohol addiction are some of the most disadvantaged in our community, and this is especially the case in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. These people are likely to need greater access to routine health care as they seek to break the cycle of dependency. While the ability to provide clinical or therapeutic services is only one aspect of rehabilitation, we believe that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm may not be able to offer truly holistic wraparound services without these components.

The model of care outlined in the Assembly last week has many positive aspects and will provide a valuable service to a section of the community, but it should not be the end goal for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. This project has had a long and complicated history and the original vision many years ago was to establish an Indigenous-specific drug and alcohol rehabilitation service. While the current model and programs do not yet fully realise this vision, the recent opening of the service shows that significant progress is being made. From everything I have heard the minister say in this place, she is committed to an evolving model of care and is open to the idea of more services being available on the site in the future. I am pleased to see that this commitment is also included in the minister’s amendment to this motion.

However, we need to acknowledge that there are some significant barriers to offering clinical and therapeutic drug and alcohol rehabilitation services at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm at this stage. The current lease conditions do not allow for the provision of either clinical or therapeutic services on the site, to my understanding. That is a very significant point.

I would like to be clear with the Assembly that, as I understand these things, there are differences between “clinical” and “therapeutic”, with therapeutic services being broader and not necessarily involving medical interventions. For example, I understand that art therapy or other specific counselling modalities may not currently be offered on site. So while the Greens do acknowledge that the process to change this would likely be lengthy and require significant consultation with local landowners, these are not insurmountable barriers. That said, I understand the minister’s desire to give the current model adequate time before undertaking a review and considering changes to the service going forward.

That is why we see text that says that the minister is proposing that there be a review after a year, and that that is the time to look at land use change issues. That is why the Greens will be supporting the government's amendment today, because it commits the government to exploring possible changes to the land lease arrangements at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm site as part of a 12-month review of the program. The amendment acknowledges the recent progress that has occurred and the benefits that the farm will bring in its current form. At the same time I believe the model of care can and should be reviewed to ensure that the facility achieves its full potential. I believe that part of this process is revisiting the idea of a lease variation to allow the facility to operate as a rehabilitation centre which includes the provision of therapeutic services.

I am not suggesting that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm should become a full detoxification facility. The best advice I have is that the site would not be appropriate for this level of intensive care, given how distant it is from the hospital, for example. Additionally, we already have a number of these facilities in the ACT and they do a fantastic job of delivering that specific service. But even after the initial detox period, the vast majority of people who have experienced drug or alcohol addiction will have underlying physical or mental health issues that need ongoing monitoring and care.

It is problematic that, under the current model of care, the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm cannot provide counselling services or host GP or nurse practitioner check-ups on site. These are basic services that will be important for ensuring that residential clients, once this phase has begun, are provided with holistic care. That is why the government's commitment to look at a lease variation is so important. I thank the minister for including this clause in the amendment and I look forward to seeing the outcomes of the review and how the facility can continue to be improved.

The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm has the potential to be a real asset to the ACT's health system and to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The current model of care has a focus on healing and on dealing with the underlying issues that lead to drug and alcohol addiction, not just the symptoms. The focus on spiritual and cultural wellbeing is underutilised in Australia, although we have seen its effectiveness in a number of countries around the world. There are a number of aspects which indicate that the facility can make a real difference to helping people to break the cycle of addiction.

But, as the minister said in her statement last week, the current suite of programs is not complete. As I have touched on, the Greens are pleased that the government's amendment recognises the need for the facility to change over time, in line with its original vision, and that the minister has agreed to explore changes to the lease conditions as part of this progress.

I have been very clear today that I think that a lease variation to allow therapeutic services at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm could lead to improved drug and alcohol rehabilitation services on the site and should be very seriously considered. The question I pose to the opposition is whether they would be prepared to support this process.

Mr Milligan and his predecessor Mr Wall have come into this place on many occasions and claimed to be advocating for good outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. While this motion claims that the farm does not meet the needs of the local community, Mr Milligan does not propose any solution for what a solution would look like. I invite him, in his closing remarks, to provide the Assembly and the community with an assurance that the Canberra Liberals are interested in constructive solutions, including considering a lease variation to the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm site to allow clinical services to be provided at the facility. It would be a welcome sign that those opposite are not just interested in attacking the government when the moment arises but are genuinely willing to put their time and efforts into improving outcomes for their local communities.

What I heard today was a series of criticisms. I heard Mr Milligan talking about the fact that there were more costs. It was an interesting observation because he said, "The costs blew out; they had to pay for the asbestos to be removed." Yes, that should have been spent. I am comfortable with the fact that that money was spent. "They had to spend money on an access road." Yes, that money had to be spent on an access road. If the suggestion is that the asbestos should not have been removed or the access road should not have been built, let us be open and honest about that.

**Mrs Dunne:** No, you should have planned better.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Mrs Dunne will have her chance to intervene in a moment. Mr Milligan was heard in silence. Even though I did not agree with everything he said, he was heard in silence.

What we know is that this has a long and controversial history, but it is a complex issue to change the lease. It is something we will have to deal with very carefully with the community. If we want to get the outcomes that Mr Milligan is alluding to then this Assembly needs to work together to do that, and to take that community on the journey.

The Greens are willing to go down that pathway. If we want to get the model that people are talking about, that is what is needed. Let us hear from those opposite that they are willing to have that conversation as well, so that we can have a serious conversation about getting to the model that they are discussing.

In conclusion I want to acknowledge the work of the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and other Indigenous community groups who have worked so hard for so long to see this project become a reality. It is important that the community continue to play a central role in designing a culturally appropriate model of care and implementing the services at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. By continuing to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the Greens believe this facility can help improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people in the territory, particularly those struggling with drug and alcohol addictions. As I have indicated, the Greens will be supporting the motion as amended.

**MRS DUNNE** (Ginninderra) (5.12): I thank Mr Milligan for bringing this important motion here today, yet again highlighting the failures of this government in relation to the people of the ACT, specifically the Indigenous population in the ACT.

Once again, we have seen a policy and a speech from the minister which are long on buzzwords and short—very short—on the delivery of outcomes. I acknowledge the challenge put out by Mr Rattenbury that says that it is now up to the opposition to come up with a solution, that it is the opposition's responsibility to be the solvers of this problem. The opposition has been playing its part by casting light on the problems that this government would prefer to have swept under the table, and casting light on the prevarications that we have seen and the hiding of the facts that we have seen in this issue.

The hiding of the facts can be no better exemplified than in the minister's proposed amendments to Mr Milligan's motion. Let us look at some of the words in that amendment. The first part of the amendment describes the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm as being set up "to address the root causes of alcohol and drug use". Mr Milligan's motion notes that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm has a model of service delivery that addresses only the final stages in the treatment of drug and alcohol dependency. The root causes of drug and alcohol use need to have already been addressed before participants can get onto the site. If the purpose of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is to address the root causes of drug and alcohol use, it must be set up as it was intended, and with the \$12 million appropriation.

What was that intention? That intention was to establish a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility. I heard the minister; I listened very carefully to the minister. I would like her to reflect on what she said. My recollection of what she said is that that had never been the intention. I would like her to reflect upon that. If she did say that, she needs to go back and look at the history and then reflect on whether or not she has just misled the Assembly. From my time in this Assembly, it was clear that the bush healing farm, before it had a home, when it was proposed to be at Kama, long before it moved to Miowera, was to be a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility for the Indigenous community. The words "residential" and "rehabilitation" are critical words here. Those are the critical elements of any program that addresses the root cause of drug and alcohol abuse. The words are entirely missing from the government's current plan for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm.

The minister also says that residential services will become available in the future, with residential accommodation already built. Why did they build residential accommodation if that had not been the plan?

The minister's own amendment puts the lie to the things that she said in her speech today. The residential facilities have been built, at great cost. And going back to the point made by Minister Rattenbury, we are not saying that the asbestos should not have been removed; we are not saying that the bridge should not have been upgraded; we are not saying that the access road should not have been fixed. But these things should all have been planned for and not come as a surprise. They should not have come as a surprise as we went along, and caused significant delay.

The issue that needs to be dealt with is this: when Jon Stanhope and the Ngunnawal elders proposed this, they proposed a particular plan with a particular mode of treatment in mind. There was a proposal that we have it at Kama and then there was a proposal that we have it at Miowera. Then the residents around Miowera took the matter to the AAT. It became clear in that process that the lease purpose, the land use policies, for Miowera, did not allow for a residential facility which treated people with drug and alcohol problems.

I am pleased that we see here today that the minister has said that we are going to look at land use changes. "We are going to look at land use changes." We might look at them, if you read it very carefully, Madam Speaker, in a year's time. What we are telling the Indigenous community in the ACT about their newly minted Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is that it might meet their expectations some time in the never-never. The government has put it off. I underscore this by quoting the minister when she said "consider revisiting permitted land uses ... after 12 months of operation". This clearly puts this whole matter way in the never-never.

The government is putting this off for at least a year and then considering it. Mr Gentleman can tell us how long it takes to change the land use purposes of a rural lease; it will take some time. In the meantime, the clients of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, who will have already been substantially rehabilitated, will be bussed to and fro every day for their 10-week program. First of all, these clients have to go through what looks like an undignified assessment process to even get through the gate of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. Then they will have to drive into a facility and be confronted with a residential facility that they cannot use. They will be expected to understand and trust the government to come up with a better program for them in the future.

Every single day for 10 weeks, the clients of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm will be bussed to and from the facility, driving past the stark physical reminders of what could have been. Those clients will see what should have been for them the holistic residential therapeutic rehabilitation program to help them get back on track and start a new life. Those clients of the bush healing farm will have the notion reinforced that they do not have permanence and that they do not matter. It will reinforce the notion that these vulnerable clients have nowhere that they can call home, even if it is for a relatively short time in a rehabilitation program. It will reinforce the notion that these clients have continuing uncertainty in their lives.

What sort of psychological effect will that have on these clients? How will this contribute to their recovery from the oh-so-familiar feelings of isolation, exclusion and hopelessness? And what happens to those clients after they are dropped back in Woden before they are picked up again the next morning? Who cares for them overnight? Who takes them home? Who will help them answer the questions that come to them in the dark, quiet, silent loneliness of the night? We all know what that is like, even those of us who live comfortable and secure lives.

This program, as it is currently designed, provides no certainty for the most vulnerable people in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and it is very likely the antithesis of their culture. I hope that we are not setting this program up to fail. What has been put forward is a poor imitation of what the government under Jon Stanhope promised.

This government boasts that it has spent \$12 million on a shiny new facility, but, as I am bored with saying, in a way, spending money is not a sign of good outcomes; it is a sign of spending money. The problem is that the facility with its present functions is likely to fail, and it is likely to fail the people of the ACT who need it most.

I commend Mr Milligan for bringing this matter again to the Assembly. I see that there is some hope in the government's amendments, but I am still not satisfied that the minister is serious in her endeavour. I would like her to reflect on what she had to say here and consider whether she needs to correct the record.

**MR MILLIGAN** (Yerrabi) (5.21): I thank members for their comments on the motion which I have presented. I do not agree with the changes which have been proposed by the minister. I recall that in my last motion I called on the government to apply for a lease variation to include a clinical model of care; I thank Mr Rattenbury for reminding me of that.

Many of the matters for note in my original motion are a matter of public record. The property known as the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is not an alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility, even though this is what the original intent of the farm was, as stated by Jon Stanhope and reiterated by him in a recent Winnunga newsletter. What has been developed does not meet the intention.

Ten years has passed and more than \$12 million has been spent on the property, which is currently nothing more than a non-residential day program centre, Regardless of what the final intent of the property may be. Of course, we would welcome a fully operational residential facility, but as this would not be a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility, the government is going to have to address this ongoing gap.

As I stated in my opening, the need for a fully functioning drug and alcohol residential facility in the ACT is necessary to address the needs of those currently required to travel interstate. We note that the model of service delivery as currently proposed for the property is suitable only for the final stages in the treatment of drug and alcohol dependency recovery.

I understand and accept the minister's assurance that Indigenous employees are engaged in the property. However, this does not mean that Indigenous led or owned organisations have been engaged. We firmly believe, and research shows and supports this, that Indigenous issues are best resolved with or by Indigenous communities. We must begin to engage Indigenous led, owned and operated organisations in the provision of services to that community.

Most importantly, we noted, and I reiterate, the urgent need in the local community for an Indigenous drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility delivering a clinical model of care. We welcome the proposed review of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm in 12 months but, again, unless the final outcome and intent are to deliver a fully functioning clinical care facility, the gap continues.

I can only continue to support the Indigenous community in their continued call for a clinical care facility that will meet the ongoing and urgent needs of their community. The need for such a facility has never been greater, as stated by senior members of that community such as the CEO of Winnunga and previous members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

The amended motion as presented does not address these issues. We understand the work that has to be done at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, but we wish to move on from this. The motion I presented is not about the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm; it is to detail the failure of the government to deliver on its original promise made 10 years ago.

I call on the government to accept responsibility for failing to keep to the original commitment made by Jon Stanhope in 2007 to deliver to the Indigenous community in the ACT a drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation facility. I call on the government to detail how they would deliver on a clinical care facility that is not the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, committing to construction and funding as a matter of urgency. This is a facility which has been requested and is much needed by the ACT Indigenous community.

This should be a facility that will provide an appropriate clinical—once again: clinical—model of care. And it should be a facility which is run by Indigenous organisations for the Indigenous peoples of the ACT.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## **Municipal services**

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (5.26) I seek leave to amend my notice of motion in the terms circulated.

Leave granted.

**MS ORR:** I move the amended motion relating to municipal services:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) each year the ACT Government mows 30 000 hectares of grass across our suburbs and along arterial roads, maintains around 2 500 kilometres of footpaths, resurfaces more than a million square metres of road, and makes over 6.8 million household rubbish collections and 3.5 million household recycling collections;
  - (b) the ACT Government is delivering on its commitment to improve the look and feel of our city through practical municipal improvements across Canberra;
  - (c) the 2017-18 Budget invests in better road maintenance, safety in school zones, better playground and sporting facilities, better weed control and better graffiti management;
  - (d) the ACT grew faster than any State or Territory over the past five years, adding more than 40 000 new residents—an increase of 11 percent;
  - (e) our rapid population growth creates more demand for services which means that the level and focus of city services needs to change too;
  - (f) the ACT Government provided more than \$2.3 million this year for city services in our new suburbs, covering the maintenance of roads, paths and parkland, as well as essential services such as waste and recycling collections;
  - (g) the Minister for Transport and City Services yesterday launched the Better Suburbs program. This program involves extensive community engagement to develop a Better Suburbs Statement that will outline the vision and priorities for the delivery of city services in the future; and
  - (h) the ACT Government has committed to a participatory budgeting pilot in the 2018-2019 budget cycle that will give a representative cross-section of the Canberra community an opportunity to consider and make clear recommendations on how a discretionary portion of the City Services budget could be allocated to best reflect community priorities; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) continue to invest in better city services to support the growth of new suburbs and the renewal of established suburbs across Canberra;
  - (b) engage across the whole Canberra community to better understand their needs and how they prioritise city services, including domestic animals, parks and public amenity, sporting and recreational facilities, shopping precincts, trees and shrubs, roads, waste management, traffic management, street lighting, storm water infrastructure, footpaths and cycle paths;
  - (c) ensure that decisions about city services are informed by local residents and ratepayers to achieve the appropriate balance in services and infrastructure that meet changing needs and are financially sustainable; and

- (d) set a long term vision for the delivery of city services for Canberra based on this engagement that fosters a strong and genuine sense of shared responsibility amongst the community.

The 2016 census tells us that Canberra is growing fast. In fact, over the last five years the ACT grew 11 per cent, outgrowing every other state and territory in Australia. Some 40,000 new residents have joined us here in the nation's capital since 2012. Many of these residents have found homes in Canberra's newer outer suburbs. Gungahlin, in my electorate of Yerrabi, is experiencing the second highest growth rate of any region in Australia. We are seeing more and more people join our community as we continue to grow in existing and new suburbs. And we are not about to see this growth slow.

As I spoke about in our sitting back in August, population growth of this magnitude demands ongoing government investment. Increasing the quantity of municipal services is essential to meet this need. However, in order to deliver necessary services to an increasing number of Canberrans, the government recognises the need to transform the way these services are undertaken in order to match the growth we are experiencing. To achieve this, a strategic approach is vital. It is this strategic element that makes the better suburbs program so significant to the community, both now and over the longer term. The better suburbs program is centred on what the Canberra community envisions for the ACT. The consultation we undertake now with Canberrans will identify their priorities and values and serve as a foundation for how our city services are planned and delivered.

It should be noted that the better suburbs program includes funding specifically allocated to forming a small and dynamic team who have already begun planning a way forward for the efficient delivery of municipal services in the ACT. The better suburbs community engagement process will enable this strategic team to develop innovative ways to balance municipal resources across Canberra. This will ensure that our delivery of municipal services to the people of Canberra is more efficient than ever, to accommodate our ever-growing city. TCCS will partner with the community to align these new solutions with existing public expectations. The better suburbs program will also see a thorough review of the efficacy and relevance of existing legislation, which may result in changes to ensure that our legislation is flexible and responsive to the changing nature of Canberra.

With an increasing number of young families now calling Canberra home, our city is renowned for being one of the most livable and accessible cities in the country. Our city services delivery is key to livability. Canberra's urban forest, comprising over 760,000 trees in our urban parks and streets, provides shade cover and visual amenity to residents and visitors alike, not to mention the role our living infrastructure has to play in mitigating the effects of climate change. Some 1,330 tree plantings are also planned over a three-year period, in addition to existing tree replacement programs.

Tens of thousands of hectares of grass is mowed by the ACT government every year across Canberra, with emphasis on major entry roads to the city and from the airport. Hundreds of sportsgrounds are provided and maintained, graffiti is monitored, removed and prevented through education programs and diversion measures. These are just some of the contributing factors making Canberra a livable and beautiful city.

But in a climate of growth and residential developments it is not sustainable to continue these services without taking a strategic approach. This cannot be done without first understanding the views and needs of the community. Currently, the ACT government manages a wide range of assets and services. We have over 1,200 bridges and drainage tunnels, 507 playgrounds, 280 irrigated sportsgrounds, nine public libraries and 112 urban lakes and ponds, to name but a few of the assets.

Our community path network is approximately 3,000 kilometres long. With the development and expansion of new suburbs expected to continue, we must focus on these assets to ensure a sustainable and equitable delivery of services. Already a program is underway to upgrade the 3,000 kilometres of community paths in our suburbs to encourage people to embrace an active and healthy lifestyle, which also reduces emissions and serves to reduce traffic congestion on the ACT's thousands of kilometres of roads.

There are also some initiatives well underway to promote physical activity around our schools which are being coordinated by a dedicated schools program manager within TCCS. Seventy-two schools are participating in the ride or walk to school program. This number is expected to increase by another 36 schools by the end of next year. Earlier this year I was lucky enough to attend the ride or walk to school event at Weetangera Primary School. The students really enjoyed getting out in the winter sun for a brisk walk to school while socialising with one another.

A well-known deterrent for people to embrace active travel is safety risk, whether by traffic levels or by poor lighting in Canberra's streets. Traffic calming measures are being progressed across the ACT in an effort to reduce speeds and improve safety on our roads for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists alike. Public street lighting is also very significant for encouraging active travel and helping people to feel safe and welcome to use Canberra's many community paths and urban parks.

TCCS manages approximately 79,000 streetlights. An audit of this streetlight network is currently underway to ensure that there are no safety issues present. The quality and visual amenity of our suburbs is enhanced dramatically by our many beautiful urban parks, lakes and ponds. The federal government announced that it would contribute \$85 million to the ACT healthy waterways project to improve the quality of water flowing into the Murray-Darling River, in addition to \$8.5 million provided by the ACT government.

The project involves the installation of water management systems across Canberra to filter and clean waterways and is expected to be completed by the end of 2019. Whilst this is a positive step forward for residents and for the health of the Murray-Darling,

the maintenance of these systems will be ongoing and on top of a growing population. We must use a strategic approach to this city maintenance to ensure that Canberra is kept clean, safe and livable for all residents and visitors.

Managing the increasing levels of stormwater, particularly water resulting from newly developed suburbs, is a major responsibility for government, with approximately 4,000 kilometres of stormwater pipes and infrastructure already being managed across the territory. This stormwater network has an estimated replacement value of around \$4 billion. It is essential for reducing flooding and maintaining the quality of parks, streets and urban lakes and ponds. Managing the increasing levels of stormwater, particularly water resulting from newly developed suburbs, is a major responsibility for the government.

In line with these directions, having a smart, efficient and innovative waste management system is a major priority for the ACT. A number of measures are in place to meet the target of 90 per cent resource recovery by the year 2025. One such measure was the introduction of the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016 and the 2017 regulation. This improved regulatory framework strengthens the capacity of the government to manage issues such as illegal dumping and is only the beginning of further reforms to come, thanks to the waste feasibility study currently underway.

The container deposit scheme is also a promising initiative expected to commence early next year. This scheme will serve to reduce the levels of litter in our streets, parks and waterways, thus improving the quality of our public places. As the amenity of our city is something we all value, extra horticultural and cleaning maintenance at entry roads into the ACT from Canberra Airport continues to be carried out, particularly in terms of increased mowing, weeding and litter removal along the major roads.

Weed control along arterial roads has recently been further enhanced through the introduction of innovative weeding technology. This not only has improved the amenity of our suburbs by significantly reducing weed growth but has also improved the safety of government staff who work to keep our streets clean. Weeding is carried out around park benches and public art, kerbs and gutters, road medians and roundabouts, urban parks and ponds. This work is vital to maintain the amenity of our public places and has proven to be of keen interest to locals, who care about their suburbs.

The better suburbs program will endeavour to work with the community to determine which services are most highly valued and which are the highest priority. Canberrans will have a significant role to play in defining the outcomes of this initiative and the future of how city services are coordinated and programmed. The collaboration we are undertaking with the people of Canberra will shape how people use public spaces over time.

For new suburbs we have a new opportunity to start from scratch with our services. Setting new habits for community engagement can lower costs, help reach better

outcomes and establish better communication between the government and the community. For residents settled in Canberra's more established suburbs we have an opportunity to renew our approach. These residents may have been in the same property for decades or they may have moved streets to reflect the various stages of family life. These residents have watched their communities change as Canberra has become a major city rather than a regional town.

The services we provide to our communities should change and develop with them. Different communities have different needs and different values and their services should be better tailored to suit those needs and values. The new suburbs in my electorate are expected to grow at a rapid rate in the coming years. These locations will need investment in new infrastructure to establish these communities into the future.

The older suburbs of Yerrabi, on the other hand, will need infrastructure that enables the community to adapt to generational changes as empty nesters look to downsize and their children enter the housing market. Things like road maintenance, upkeep of footpaths, bike paths, parks and playgrounds, mowing and rubbish collection are essential in all suburbs, but the levels of need and how each community prioritises them may differ. Suburbs with lots of dogs might prefer more frequent mowing to stop grass seeds. Communities with kids might prefer newer parks. Footpaths may need closer maintenance in areas where residents have lower mobility.

It is important to appreciate that each of these services faces a budget constraint. It is therefore appropriate to engage our community in a conversation on how we value each of these services and how that is best reflected in the ACT budget. Ongoing consultation with community, businesses and research groups can help us to deliver a better standard of service specifically tailored to the needs of the local community.

Making our services flexible for residents can also enable our community to be more involved in local government. I recently became aware of calls from residents in Waramanga for a similar approach. They acknowledge that while their suburb has bountiful playgrounds, they would rather prefer one closer to their local shop. They are currently undergoing discussions about how playgrounds in their area can be better distributed. This approach is not just coming from the top down. It is coming from other Assembly members.

As many of us in the Assembly will realise, I talk a lot about Giralang. The shops and the park in particular have been areas I have been working on for a while now. After the ACT government's commitment to design and deliver a new park for Giralang, I have been talking to the community to help ensure that work begins this year and that they are part of the process. In my efforts to deliver a community park for Giralang, I have been asking residents what they actually want to see in their park.

By going door to door and running a survey on my website, my team and I have been collecting Giralang's views on what to put in their park, with suggestions and preferences from the whole community. It has been interesting to see the varied responses across Giralang. When told that we are asking for residents' input to start

with, rather than presenting a proposal that they can apply adjustments to, most people have responded with pleasant surprise. This is the sort of long-term vision provided by the better suburbs plan. By engaging our community in an open discussion, this strategy serves to improve the understanding our community has of our existing approach and to instil our community values into how we go about service delivery into the future.

In presenting this motion, I call on the ACT government to pursue community engagement and to continue to deliver on the ACT government's commitment to improving our consultation processes. I call on all members to support the motion, in acknowledgement of the progress the government is making in hearing the voices of Canberrans as we plan for our city's future.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.39): The Canberra Liberals welcome this opportunity to discuss what I think is core business for this place—the delivery of urban services. Of course, roads, rates and rubbish, as it is regularly referred to, is usually the domain of councils. However, we in this place have the broad portfolio of everything from rubbish bins through to the health service. Sometimes it is very easy for the Assembly, and perhaps even for ministers, to get caught up with those state functions and not give due attention to what are essentially urban services or council services.

These are the sorts of issues that make and break council elections right around the country. These are issues that determine whether mayors get elected and whether councillors get returned. These are things that actually determine the make-up of councils right across Australia, whereas here, because we do not necessarily have that 100 per cent focus on these issues, sometimes it is easy for a lot of them to fly under the radar. So I do appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter this afternoon.

There are many areas that we could touch on in this debate, and I am sure collectively we will do a pretty good job of doing so. There are a few in particular that I want to mention. The first of those is street sweeping. The government will say that streets get swept every three months. I certainly hope that is the case, but I have a feeling that if you were to camp outside your house for 90 days, you would not necessarily see a truck come by your house. I hope you would, but I think there is a fair chance that, whilst there might be some that are being done frequently, there are probably others that are being done less frequently. Whilst it may well be that they are clocking up a certain number of kilometres that averages out to be every street once every three months, it is probably a bit of a stretch to say that every single street in Canberra is being swept every three months. But if the government has data to the contrary, I would be delighted to see it.

There are several issues with the schedule. There are several suburbs that are not included—Pialligo, Fyshwick, Lawson, Casey, Throsby, Jacka, Mitchell, Moncrieff, Taylor, Coombs, Wright and Denman. I note that the street sweeping schedule was last updated in August 2014 and that an update is due in December 2017. That is according to the answer to a question on notice that we received on this subject. I am surprised that there is such a lengthy gap in the schedule being updated. I would have

thought they could have a far more dynamic approach to updating the schedule than three-and-a-bit years. I think it is important that other suburbs that are not currently listed at least get put on that schedule so that there is some confidence and certainty about what they are getting for their rates.

As I mentioned earlier today, the lack of urban services being delivered in Mitchell is very much a real issue. I do not think it is just a perception; I think it is a real issue. The fact that street sweeping for Mitchell is not on the schedule is problematic. The following answer was given to a question on notice:

Suburbs not currently listed on the street sweeping schedule are included in the program, except for Wright, Coombs, Fyshwick and Mitchell which are swept upon request. Construction of Taylor and Throsby is not yet completed.

The street sweeping budget for 2016-17 was \$1.8 million and the actual expenditure was \$1.17 million. So there was a \$600,000 saving, and I wonder how they actually achieved that and what the reason was for that saving. Did they do less or were they just particularly efficient in going around the suburbs?

Another part of the urban services portfolio that I want to touch on is fix my street, which is part of Access Canberra. According to the answer to question on notice No 246, there is an average of four days to respond to requests and an average of eight days to close a fix my street request. However, there are certainly people that wait for many months. I realise very broad requests can be put through and, to that end, some of them do take a considerable amount of time to fulfil.

I note that the most popular fix my street submissions, as of May this year, included trees and shrubs, almost 7,000; streetlights, just over 5,000; litter and illegal dumping, almost 2,000; potholes, about 1,500; and footpaths, a similar number. When you combine all the road-related categories—that is, potholes, roads, road signs and road safety—you get in the vicinity of 4½ thousand. I also note that there were 577 complaints about election signage, for which we can all take our share of responsibility.

With regard to data collection capabilities, I note that the minister has advised there is a new strategy to improve data collection, and part of that is a new “offensive” subcategory for graffiti. I think that is a good development, especially in response to the swastika we saw in Giralang a month ago or thereabouts. That “offensive” subcategory will certainly help to prioritise those sorts of issues.

The final issue I will touch on, noting that a few people want to speak on this issue, is footpaths. In Mr Doszpot’s absence, I should make mention of the residents of Campbell, who have been without footpaths for many decades—pretty much since the mid-50s, when the suburb was gazetted. There are many people, including my parents-in-law—just to declare that—who would dearly love a footpath out the front of their house.

Whilst it is extremely expensive to retrofit, many people over the years have promised footpaths in some of these older suburbs that do not have them. I know that many streets in the inner south and the inner north do not have adequate footpaths. If we are serious about improving active travel and about trying to get people to make the most of public transport, we need to have proper footpath connections to facilitate that. So whilst it is, of course, a considerable expense, it would be wise of the government to develop a strategy or plan—even if it is a 10 or 20-year plan—about how footpaths can be delivered to many of these older suburbs that simply do not have them.

In conclusion, I want to pay tribute to the staff of TCCS. I know that they have a tough job. They have many competing demands. There is a bit of “how long is a piece of string?” in that portfolio. Especially in this spring season, when everything is growing frantically, I know there are many people, especially those out on the road, that will be flat out attending to the amenity of our city.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (5.48): I thank Ms Orr for moving this motion and reiterating the government’s support for the city services participatory budgeting trial I raised last month. As I am sure we all know, and as Ms Orr and Mr Coe have reiterated, our experience as MLAs is that city services are by far and away the most popular topic of conversations with constituents. Whether it is a new playground in their neighbourhood, wanting to get a pet dog for their kids or the lack of street lighting in an underpass, this is what people talk to you about. This is what matters to everybody. You deal with health if something goes wrong and you are sick, and with education if you have school-age kids, but city services is something that everyone in Canberra deals with. Usually, it is a very positive experience, I would have to say. We are very fortunate in our city services in Canberra.

This reminds me of something that I was told recently—a fun phrase called “sewer socialism”. It is a concept that is fundamental to how the Greens and other social democratic parties approach government. I seek the Assembly’s indulgence to give a little bit of a history lesson. Sewer socialism is an American phrase coming out of the city of Milwaukee. It was a pejorative term originally, poking fun at how the Milwaukee City Council, which was dominated by the Socialist Party between 1910 and 1960, would brag constantly about how excellent their public sewer system was.

At first, it seems ridiculous. Why brag about your sewer? But the point was pretty simple. The sewer was the symbol of government’s role and duty to ensure that the dirty and polluting legacy of capital—in their case the Industrial Revolution—was mitigated by government action, and that, in doing so, the growth at the top was redistributed down, in the form of public projects to benefit everyone. We can thank radicals, activists and unions for raising the public profile of problems in these early days, like the absence of proper sanitation, unequal access to water and power and the absence of public education, and our social democratic forebears, like those in Milwaukee, for organising, campaigning and actually doing something to make people’s lives better.

Sewerage actually is still a live issue in Canberra. As members may know, I used to live in Downer, and there has been considerable planned expansion of housing in Downer. The Downer Community Association for many years has been campaigning for a sewer upgrade before there is any housing expansion. The late Di Fielding was our convenor for many years, and we normally referred to it as the “Di Fielding memorial sewer”. I understand it has been planned but not yet constructed. This sort of stuff is still an issue for an affluent, well-run city like Canberra.

As I said, these everyday things make such a huge difference to how people live their lives. It is not so much about a convention centre, and for most people in Canberra it is not so much about light rail. It is about things like your rates bill and it is the footpath that you walk on every day. Almost all of us walk on footpaths on a regular basis, and I have met a number of people who feel they cannot leave their houses in safety because their local footpaths are not in good enough condition. And if it seems that the bus is running late, it means your kids do not get to school on time or you do not get to work on time.

There is another useful phrase from previous times. I have known about this one for some time because it is from the second wave of feminism—that is, “the personal is political”. When Carol Hanisch coined that phrase, she was referring to personal relationships and the invisibility of the private lives of women to the public world of politics. But it is just as relevant to the personal interactions people have with public utilities and private space. The personal is political.

This is one of the things that the Women’s Centre for Health Matters have been doing with their mapping of where people feel safe in the public space and where they do not. I think Ms Lawder has also heard some presentations from the women’s centre on this issue. It is certainly an instance of the personal being political. Of course, right now, the best example of that—it is not city services, I admit—is the marriage equality debate, where the personal has become well and truly political.

With respect to another instance, one of the major reasons that the modern world has drinking fountains is because of the struggles of early feminist movements like the Temperance Union. They did not want people drinking alcohol, so they wanted water available everywhere. The reason that we have public sewers and public toilets, and the whole idea of public health services, is due to firebrand reformers like Edwin Chadwick, George Jennings, Robert Owen and Josephine Butler, and their compatriots all around the world who pushed for reforms in their own countries.

There is an example in recent memory of what happens when we lose sight of the most vulnerable in municipal matters and start pretending it is all apolitical. Across our cities, and even in Canberra, we have seen the rise of “aggressive architecture”; that is, architecture which has been made with the purpose of punishing and isolating the homeless, poverty stricken and most vulnerable members of our societies, such as having extra bars on public benches. You may have noticed that all the benches in the open areas of the ACT have little bumps on them. If you have wondered why, that is because officially we do not like skateboarders anymore. Also, we have often replaced square windowsills with rounded ones.

It happens here. Those of us who are older, like me, will remember what the Civic bus interchange used to be like. There was a lot more shelter. If it rained, you would not get wet. My understanding is that one of the major reasons that we refurbished the Civic bus interchange so that you do get wet in the rain was to make it less attractive to homeless people to hang out there—not, of course, to improve the lives of homeless people but just to move them away so that sensible middle-class people do not have to look at them. Of course, we have all been told that the reason that we get to listen to classical music in the evening at bus interchanges is to deter people who might be loitering there. That is insulting both to classical music and to people who go to bus interchanges.

It is important to remember that public infrastructure and public space do not come about just because of the benevolence of a well-meaning government. We talked earlier today about social inclusion, not social exclusion. It is something that needs to be a part of city services as well as the other things we have talked about. We must not forget the concerns of local communities, and we must not forget to listen to the concerns of those who use public space and public amenities, and who are most vulnerable to its loss and degradation.

I appreciate in general how the ACT approaches city services and gives it the level of importance it deserves. Historically, we have done very well on this. Our city services are good, and in general they have been very equitably distributed throughout Canberra. But we should not pretend that we are not at risk, as are other jurisdictions, from decisions on city services and planning which are made in favour of those whose voices are the loudest and most prevalent, and in some instances those who are richer. City services are done well in Canberra. They do deserve a minister and a directorate, and they have a minister and a directorate, because it is political.

Going to more of the specifics, and the substance of many of the issues in Ms Orr's motion, playgrounds are probably the most contested area in city services in the ACT. Every suburb in my electorate would like to see a playground like the one in Chifley—those of them who have not been ambitious enough to think that Kambah has really got it.

As I mentioned, everyone wants better footpaths. Mr Coe is quite correct in pointing out that much of Canberra, particularly older Canberra, does not have footpaths, regardless of what condition they are in. This is a serious social inclusion issue. I am very pleased that there is an extra \$30 million in the parliamentary agreement, some of which will go to the maintenance of footpaths and some of which will go to new footpaths.

Active travel is something that this government is prioritising as part of the parliamentary agreement, and we have to keep on prioritising that. I am very pleased that the ACT is taking community engagement on these issues seriously. The better suburbs initiative, hopefully, will be a good one. It has real capacity. I have sent links to it to a number of constituents already who are having issues with prioritisation. Of course, in the future, this is the reason why we will do the participatory budgeting trial. There are a finite number of government resources and there are close to an infinite number of demands. We have to work out better, fairer ways of prioritising them.

One of the important things is that local communities can work well with TCCS. I am aware of a few examples where local communities are trying to help their local area and they do not get supported; they are unsupported. The most obvious example in my electorate is Farrer. Members are probably aware—it has been discussed and there has been a petition about it in the Assembly—that the proprietor of the cafe there, the Fox and Bow, put up a basketball hoop. It was there for a few months, somebody complained about it and it had a big sticker put on it. It was something that was only doing good for the community, and I would urge TCCS to think of better ways of doing this so that people who are doing low risk, good things for their community are not affected.

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

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Another thing to talk about is the environmental sustainability role of city services. Climate change is one of the reasons that we have so many issues here, particularly with maintenance of trees. Our urban forest is, in some instances, in a very poor condition. If it rains, we have a lot of grass to mow. We need our green canopy. We need biodiversity within our city to keep our bush capital green. Population growth is mentioned in Ms Orr's motion. It is important to be clear that this is a mixed blessing and we cannot just say that it is a given. We need to look at equity and long-term sustainability with respect to population growth.

Another thing that is important, on this and other issues, is that the government actually follows through with commitments—commitments made an election ago or two elections ago. I have spoken to many people about commitments that have been made on Stromlo park. The swimming pool has been promised many times, just as the Gungahlin swimming pool was promised many times. I hope that the resource prioritisation approach from the better suburbs program will help local communities to better understand the territory-wide programs, like the local shop upgrades, so that they can more effectively advocate for the things that really matter to them. I commend Ms Orr for this motion. It is a really important matter and it is well worth the Assembly's attention.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee) (6.02): I start by thanking Ms Orr for bringing this motion forward. Our government went to the election last year with a positive plan to renew our neighbourhoods, to take care of the suburbs we love and make them even better. Our suburbs are some of the most livable in Australia, and our government wants to make sure that this continues as our city grows, supporting urban regeneration in our established suburbs and extending quality city services to our new suburbs as well. Today I want to talk about the important work the government is undertaking to build better suburbs and what the government is doing to ensure that the community has a greater say in our city services settings over the long term.

Our government is investing in better roads throughout the ACT, building new roads and resurfacing more than one million square metres per year of existing roads. In my electorate of Murrumbidgee, road resurfacing works in Phillip at the Melrose Drive

intersections of both Hindmarsh Drive and Brewer Street have created noticeable improvements, particularly in regard to road smoothness, protection and the extension of the life of those roads. We are also improving the technology employed in our road surfacing, reinforcing the strength of roads under continuous stress from large trucks and other heavy-duty vehicles. We are trialling the new TonerPave, which incorporates 30 per cent recycled printer toner substance, along with the world-first Tonerseal, which integrates recycled tyres as well as other substances to reduce carbon emissions and environmental waste.

Our roads are not the only area where the ACT government is improving the provision of services while achieving environmental outcomes. In addition to over 6.8 million rubbish collections and over 3.4 million recycling collections that the ACT government undertakes each year, we are rolling out green bins. The green bins pilot program began earlier this year in Weston Creek and Kambah and has been very well received in the community. The green bins will be rolled out to all suburbs over time, helping to reduce leaf litter and nutrients in our waterways. As we move into lawn-mowing season the government will continue our regular mowing program. Almost 30,000 hectares of grass on public land and along our arterial roads is mowed every year. I encourage residents to log on to the TCCS website to familiarise themselves with the mowing schedule in their neighbourhoods.

The government are also building better streets and footpaths in continuing our work on the maintenance of our 2,500 kilometres of footpaths in the ACT, because good quality footpaths and cycleway infrastructure and safer streets are part of building healthier, active and vibrant neighbourhoods in our city. Our towards zero growth healthy weight action plan highlights the importance of supporting active living. Ensuring that we have quality footpaths and better connections, along with improved school zone safety, helps to improve active travel—cycling and walking.

Road safety around schools in the territory is also being improved through the active streets program, which was piloted and evaluated at four schools earlier in the year. This will see a \$1 million expansion of the program, which will also encompass a range of schools in my electorate—Chapman, Curtin, Holy Trinity primary, Garran primary, Hughes primary, Melrose High and Sacred Heart primary. This is part of the \$30 million our government is investing over the forward estimates to improve walking and cycling infrastructure in Canberra, including improvements inside the Woden town centre, better links from the town centre to the Canberra Hospital and the Woden bus interchange, the construction of Butters Bridge in the Molonglo Valley, and upgrades to help improve accessibility for seniors in Weston.

Another important area of city services, particularly on the south side, is graffiti management. The Canberra Liberals will, no doubt, appreciate the reminder that the Callum Street drains in Woden have been reopened as a legal graffiti site to provide a constructive alternative for young people—and perhaps some MLAs—who want to engage in genuine street art, supported by the Woden Youth Centre. This is just one of the 25 so-called managed sites across Canberra serving as an outlet for youth creativity, supplementing the annual half a million dollars invested in last year's hiring of a graffiti management coordinator to help the government remove and prevent non-lawful graffiti.

Improvements to our shopping centres are particularly important as these serve as our community hubs, and the regeneration of our group centres has been prioritised by our government. Along with the \$2.3 million in upgrades to Kambah village—I was pleased to open stage 1 with the minister just on Friday—I am pleased that the ACT government is also investing \$300,000 in upgrades to Cooleman Court shopping centre and Brierly Street and Trenerry Square. Those works will also include a new grass play area, paved seating nooks with single and bench seats, shade structures, lighting, a drinking fountain, a bin and new bike racks.

As our city grows it is important that we extend services and invest in new infrastructure in our new suburbs. Up until this year the Molonglo Valley, in my own electorate, was the fastest growing suburban area in the entire country for five years in a row. That is why in Molonglo we are investing in cycleways, water supply and security, trunk sewers and other stormwater and residential infrastructure.

Because of our investments, our city's residents have come to expect high quality services. That is why, as the government continues to invest more in city services, it is important that we are responsive to residents' needs and that the priorities for our city services align with those concerns of the Canberra community. Canberrans have been very active in reporting issues through the fix my street website—potholes, footpath repairs, fallen tree branches and a host of other issues. In fact, in the last financial year 39,838 issues were lodged by 11,577 people to help identify where the government can improve our suburbs.

But that is by its nature a reactive process, and we are a progressive government. That is why this week the government has opened consultation on the longer term vision and priorities for improved city services into the future. The consultation will help inform and contribute to a better suburbs statement which will be made publicly available next year. It will set a clear vision and priorities that will guide the delivery of city services into the future. It will also give a community mandate for necessary policy and operational reforms that will improve city servicing.

This special opportunity to allow all Canberrans to shape the government's city services strategy over the next two decades will range from playgrounds, footpaths, gardens, mowing, library services and other city services. I certainly agree with Ms Orr: I have heard the message from many residents in communities, in Waramanga and Farrer in particular, in my electorate about the need to have playgrounds closer to the shops. I am sure that will probably come through in the consultations as well, given the success of Chifley.

I encourage all community groups, businesses and members of the public, old and young, to share their thoughts as part of this process and tell us what they think about our city services—what they like and what they do not like, what is important and how we can do things better as a government—so that we can develop a better suburbs statement which reflects the improvements we need for city services in our growing city. The online feedback in the statement is available on the ACT government's consultation website, [yoursay.act.gov.au](http://yoursay.act.gov.au), and residents can also attend

drop-in consultation sessions or register to attend a workshop. And the community will be further engaged with the start of the participatory budgeting process as well in 2019.

We are investing in renewing our neighbourhoods, improving the existing suburban infrastructure of Canberra and investing in the maintenance services associated with that infrastructure as well as improving the responsiveness of government to the community. We want to improve on the services that we deliver, and that is why I am so pleased that the government has announced community consultation on the better suburbs statement, a long-term vision for the delivery of city services for Canberra. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (6.10): I thank Ms Orr for bringing forward this motion and thank everyone for their contributions so far today. As the minister responsible for this area, I note all the comments made by my colleagues about the terrific work that staff in TCCS do, and I join with them in commending the staff, who are really our frontline in service delivery right across the territory every day. I encourage everyone, no matter what their views are about city services, to give our staff a wave, say hello and tell them what a great job they are doing.

I make particular mention, as Mr Steel just noted, of the better suburbs consultation that we opened yesterday. I could talk for some time about the vast number of services that are delivered, and some of the challenges in service delivery have been noted today. I commend the better suburbs consultation and engagement which we launched yesterday. As Mr Steel said, it is now available on the your say website. This will be a terrific opportunity for Canberrans and all members of the Assembly to have some input into not just the next couple of weeks or months but the next five to 10 years of city services delivery across the city as we grow, as new parts of our city start to be developed and as older suburbs in our city need to have some revitalisation. Many of those issues have been raised today.

I particularly commend to community, industry and business groups the opportunity to provide to us ideas about innovation, about better ways that we can deliver our services and about better practices they are aware of that can inform the better suburbs program. I note Ms Le Couteur's view that already formal and informal community groups are out there playing a role in helping to keep neighbourhood parks and local waterways clean. They also contribute, and we want to be able to recognise and continue to work with them and find new and simpler ways of being able to engage with the community on this.

I look forward to as many people as possible filling out the survey and joining in the subsequent facilitated workshops across the territory in November and December of this year, and also in February and March next year. They will give everyone a really great opportunity to get into some more detailed discussions about the issues we are talking about here. As has been noted, these are services that every Canberran—no matter where you live, no matter your age, no matter your background—comes into contact with every day, right across Canberra.

It was a great discussion and I welcome it. Of all the things I expected to be raised, I did not expect sewer socialism and second wave feminism to come up. I was advised that a recent episode of *Horrible Histories* gave a different historical version of the need for public toilets from the one Ms Le Couteur mentioned. But it was great to have a debate on this very important matter of government service delivery that I know affects Canberrans and on which they have very strong and welcome views. I thank Ms Orr for the motion and also note the further work that we will do, beyond the engagement on better suburbs, on community participation in the budgeting process.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (6.14): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I would like to start, as I often do when we talk on this topic, by acknowledging that the minister and previous ministers in this portfolio have been very responsive when I have approached them on various issues, and I would like to thank them for that. I have not always got what I have asked for, but certainly in some cases it has been a good result for the constituent or constituents who have contacted me. I would also like to commend the directorate. I, for one, am an enthusiastic user of fix my street. They get more than their fair share of issues that I raise as I go around my electorate.

I would like to touch on a few specific items that occur in my electorate. As Ms Le Couteur referred to, municipal issues are some of the most common types of issues that are raised by constituents. The first one I would like to touch on is Anketell Street in Greenway, opposite the hyperdome. There was an election commitment of about \$3 million to the Anketell Street renewal, and stage 1 was, I believe, recently completed. I have seen many comments on a community Facebook page called “My Tuggeranong” about the lighting feature on Anketell Street. Originally the post postulated that it was an art installation. A series of, I think, four posts have received over 17,000 views and hundreds of comments, which I think demonstrates how people are feeling about this particular lighting feature, which originally was thought to be an art installation.

While the paving, the new seating and the trees have been, I think, relatively well received—they may not have been exactly what some people were expecting—the lighting feature has attracted a lot of comments, most of them uncomplimentary, such as “It’s a bird toilet—don’t stand underneath it,” “It looks like a giant tripod for a Bunsen burner,” “It looks like a stovetop element,” “Someone will put a giant kettle on it,” and “Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it a rose trellis or a lighting feature? Or is it meant to be ‘art’?”

There was quite a bit of consultation about the Anketell Street works. I note, for example, that the Tuggeranong Community Council put in some comments. I will read a couple of those comments that the Tuggeranong Community Council put in. I read them mindful of Ms Orr’s motion about engaging the Canberra community. The Tuggeranong Community Council said, as part of quite an extensive comment:

... we are very concerned that planning for this significant public space has proceeded to a construction phase with no overall vision or plan for the lane way precinct from the Hyperdome to the lake foreshore. Furthermore, we were advised that TCCS is only addressing the Government commitment to Anketell Street and while this is important they are not looking at or planning for the overall picture which we regard as important when looking at the overall revitalisation of the Tuggeranong Town centre and consider the main thrust of the Government election commitment.

The Council is concerned that by TCCS only looking at Anketell Street and excluding any revitalising of the town square, Stage 1 of the project is not a cohesive plan that responds to other areas within the precinct, (the central square and linkage to Cowlshaw St and the northern and southern car parks). As a consequence the opportunity to revitalise the town centre may become more difficult to achieve and instead fail at this first stage. This is very much at odds with the community expectations resulting from the consultation process and understanding of the scope of the project, albeit this work is described as Stage 1 of a broader (but as yet unplanned) project. To proceed with stage 1 of this project is rather like putting a roof on a house before the walls are built and there is no floor plan for how many rooms. The risk to the overall project success is simply too great to proceed without stage 1 being revised to consider critical basic needs. A number of submissions raised concerns about the laneway and town square ...

Et cetera. Another comment that I received was from Tuggeranong Arts Centre. They felt that what was happening in stage 1 of the revitalisation along Anketell Street did not reflect community consultation. The arts centre had had plans to use it for a pop-up arts space, and the new furniture and trees that were installed made their plans and hopes impossible. So on the one hand we have a government that is saying they want community consultation, but then they are not taking that consultation and that input into account.

Another issue in my electorate is Gartside Street. Earlier this year I wrote to the minister, seeking clarifications of the plans for improvements to Gartside Street. In May, some time later, the minister wrote to me and advised me that work would commence at Gartside Street in May. On 1 June I visited Gartside Street to see how development was progressing, and it was not. I decided to post a video of the area and wrote to the minister again. The comments I received included "The place is a disaster," "I try to avoid the area due to lack of parking," "I can only hope they do something soon, as it's an area waiting for an accident to happen," "It's an absolute nightmare," and "Parking is awful, including lighting at night," et cetera.

Work is now underway, I am pleased to see. I hope, because of the late start, that it meets the deadline, that the project will be completed in November, as the minister has advised me, because at the moment with the construction work going on it is even more of a nightmare than it was before. But people are hopeful of a good end result, and I will certainly be monitoring the situation.

Another issue is the learn to ride park at Lake Tuggeranong. I have received, and I have passed on to the minister, many complimentary remarks about the learn to ride park at Lake Tuggeranong. It is a great park, and families are really enjoying it. But one of the things that I wrote to the minister about was the request from constituents for additional seating. The response I got was that the garden beds around the learn to ride park made additional seating difficult to install. Quite clearly the person who wrote that letter for the minister has not visited the learn to ride park, because there are about two small tanbarked areas and the rest of the area around the learn to ride park is vacant, with grass around it. There is no reason whatsoever why additional seating could not be installed.

Yesterday I raised the issue of the car park behind the Tuggeranong CIT and the need for better lighting. I look forward to that. Other issues I have raised with the minister, and will continue to raise when required, on behalf of constituents, include the smell from the tip. A hundred to two hundred constituents raising complaints is surely consultation with residents and should be taken seriously. Residents are directly affected, adversely affected, and if it happens again this summer I think there will be more uproar than ever before.

I would also like to mention, given that Mr Parton is not here, that we have had, I hope, a good result recently on the Mount Taylor Sulwood Drive car park. That is another TCCS issue in the Tuggeranong area that we are looking forward to being resolved.

In conclusion, I know that the directorate works very hard and has a lot of area to cover. There is a lot of work to do, but investment and improvements should be informed by consultation. That consultation must be genuine consultation, not consultation for the sake of it. It should be consultation where, when you get comments from the community, they are included in the final result—not Clayton's consultation but real consultation and making people feel more valued so that it encourages them to participate in the consultation process again because they know that their input is valued. I thank Ms Orr for raising this valuable motion. I look forward to monitoring the progress of various projects in my electorate.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong) (6.24): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly, and I echo Mr Coe's and Ms Lawder's words in commending the hard work of TCCS staff in looking after our suburbs. There are, however, some issues I wish to raise.

In June this year, I note, the Auditor-General's report into the maintenance of selected road infrastructure assets found a lack of "a systemic approach for conducting inspections of the condition and safety of community paths that are not in high priority locations". The fact that there is no system of inspections means that the government relies on the vigilance and conscientious monitoring and reporting of the state of the territory's paths by kind residents, rather than taking a proactive approach to seek out and deal with issues of maintenance, pride in our cityscape and, more importantly, safety risks.

Mowing, repairing paths and collecting bins are surely core roles of any local government. The number of logged complaints on the government's fix my street portal climbed by eight per cent in 2015-16 and has had a massive 250 per cent increase from when the portal was introduced in 2010. The ratepayers Ms Orr talks about have been deputised by this government to act as eyes and ears regarding the state of the territory's road assets.

Ms Orr is most congratulatory of the government's approach to managing assets in spite of the growth of Canberra. But, as Canberra has grown, the funding per kilometre of footpath has actually decreased, from \$1,970 per kilometre in 2011-12 to \$1,150 per kilometre in 2015-16. There is also a backlog of two million square metres in need of repair, which will cost approximately \$71 million in 2019-20.

It is timely that this motion comes at the beginning of spring, just as the pace of grass growth picks up and the medians and verges of many parts of Canberra will need particular care, at a time of one of our biggest tourist events, Floriade, and at a time when we boast about how beautiful our blooming capital is. My office, like all offices of the opposition, is being contacted regularly by constituents who are concerned about the poor state of repair of basic amenities, especially in the more established suburbs. Our being in opposition means that we are not in a position to work with the TCCS offices to improve these services. We have to seek the minister's indulgence to get some results for our constituents.

These are constituents like Isobel of Deakin, who is regularly living in a cloak of darkness because, despite raising on a number of occasions the poor state of maintenance of streetlights, it takes months for them to be fixed and, when they are, it is not done properly. Elizabeth of Kingston, after raising an issue about the safety risk of a faulty footpath near her home and having been reassured that it has been fixed, finds out that what this government classifies as "fixed" is a patch job, resulting in the risk being re-exposed within weeks. Jenny of Forrest, on behalf of whom I wrote to the minister about a cracked footpath outside her home, was told that the issue had already been addressed to render it safe, only to find that what the minister meant by "rendering it safe" was to paint two arrows on the footpath, which remain to this day, five months after it was first raised, with a reassurance that it will be fixed in February 2018, 10 months after what seems to be a straightforward issue of a cracked footpath.

Speaking of footpaths, I suppose worse than having a cracked footpath is having no footpath at all, as is the case for the residents in Campbell that Mr Coe referred to earlier. The lack of responsiveness from this minister and this government to fix broken streetlights and cracked footpaths is not all that Kurrajong residents are frustrated with. The constituents in the inner north contact my office regularly about the lack of street sweeping in suburbs like O'Connor, Dickson and Downer. We all love the leafy suburbs of our bush capital, and the government takes great advantage to sell this image to the rest of Australia and beyond. But, where they are quick to take credit, they are lacking in taking responsibility.

Leaves piling high in the gutters not only create a trip hazard but also go directly against the government's healthy waterways campaign on "only rain down the stormwater drain", a campaign that is heavily funded and supported by both the federal and the ACT governments. The minister for the environment will know very well the effect of this volume of leaves entering our stormwater system. Out of sight does not mean out of mind.

Anything entering our stormwater drains has an impact on the health of our waterways and our lakes. Even the government's own website warns Canberrans that "leaf litter is one of the biggest contaminants when it comes to stormwater" and that "excessive nutrients from leaf litter cause all sorts of problems, including blue-green algal blooms, which often result in lake closures". I have raised the issue of lack of street sweeping on more than one occasion with the minister, and it is disappointing when the answer I receive is a reiteration of the sweeping schedule that my office has already dutifully looked up.

I agree with Ms Orr that the government should "ensure that decisions about city services are informed by local residents and ratepayers", but, as Ms Lawder said, it goes to more than just putting those words out there. There is no point in asking for feedback and suggestions if the government has no intention of listening to what Canberrans have to say.

The good people of Kurrajong are being hit with whopping rates increases, and we have a growing ageing population. Fixing cracked footpaths, maintaining regular street sweeping and changing broken streetlight bulbs are basic services that any resident who pays the types of rates that Kurrajong residents do should expect of their local government. When Isobel of Deakin walks home from the bus stop in the dark, she should not be worried about her safety because the streetlight on her street is yet again out. When Elizabeth of Kingston goes for a walk on a Sunday morning, she should not be worried about tripping over a cracked footpath that she has asked to have fixed a number of times. When Jenny of Forrest has waited patiently for months for a cracked footpath to be fixed, she should not have to resort to coming to me and asking why it will take 10 months for it to be fixed. Isobel, Elizabeth, Jenny and the other residents of Kurrajong deserve better.

I again take the opportunity to thank our hardworking TCCS officials and rangers, who work hard to keep our city beautiful and functional, because I am sure that for every resident contacting me about a municipal issue there must be thousands of others that they are looking after.

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (6.31): I thank Ms Orr for bringing on this important motion today. As we have heard, we are the bush capital, a city among the trees, and the upside of this of course is our easy access to the great outdoors, breathtaking landscapes and clean air. The downside, if you had to name one, would be that nature does not always clean up after herself. It takes a lot of work to chase after her fallen leaves, to remove sick trees and to keep her grasses trim. We have the hard workers in the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate to thank for their tireless efforts in keeping Canberra beautiful.

Making sure that footpaths are even, roads are smooth, streets are swept and grass is mown is not glamorous but these municipal services are the bread and butter of ACT government. As Minister Fitzharris has said countless times before, everyone in Canberra is touched by the work that TCCS does. And as Canberra grows, maintenance work will increase and it is absolutely crucial that we engage broadly to stay abreast of community priorities.

However, today I would like to take a moment to appreciate the wealth of information that TCCS provides online about maintenance works around town—where it is happening, how it happens, why it happens that way, and everything you have ever wondered about what it takes to keep a city looking so damn fine. With a whole city to keep looking spick ‘n’ span, staying on top of the maintenance load is a matter of setting priorities and effective scheduling. Understandably, people often want to know when work is going to be undertaken around their home. Often simply knowing that the work has been scheduled is enough. Nothing is worse than thinking that your street has been overlooked or forgotten.

To help improve accessibility and keep Canberrans updated about the services that are important to them, the government maintains comprehensive resources, tracking when these services occur and on what basis these services are prioritised. There are lists about when footpaths and roads are due to be resurfaced or grass is mown. There are lists about street sweeping. And there are even interactive maps where members of the public can submit photos of spring and autumn leaves to view. These TCCS registers are really useful and interesting, admittedly in a nerdy sort of way, but a lot of people do not know about them or how they can contribute to these repositories of information. And, indeed, rather than deputising citizens, the government is providing information to its constituents.

The government regularly resurfaces roads to maintain safety and help extend the life of the road. I have had contact from several constituents wanting to know when roads in their area will be resealed. They may have particular concerns about a specific road or they might just be curious so that they can factor the roadworks into their daily plans. The good news is that TCCS provides the community with both an annual and a daily road resealing schedule online. There is also a link to fix my street so that people can report roads that may need more urgent attention. You can also find fact sheets about the road resealing program, how a road is chosen for resealing and how it is resealed. I cannot say that the science of road resealing ever took my fancy before, but, having now done an inquiry into road maintenance and viewing this information, it is actually genuinely interesting to read about how roads are resealed and about new innovations in this space, such as the use of printer cartridges in road resealing.

The road safety improvement program also produces a register which ranks the safety of roads and intersections. The report comes out annually and is available online. It lists what investigations have been recently completed and what measures have been implemented to improve safety for the top 10 problematic intersections and streets. You can also search any road to find out its current ranking.

Canberra is an active city, especially as the weather warms up, thank God. So the quality of footpaths and cycling routes is also important to the community. The community paths priority list is an online resource that every Canberran should flag. It is one of the most useful pages available, second to fix my street, for keeping our paths in great shape. The paths priority list takes into consideration fix my street requests and prioritises paths to be upgraded on the basis of safety, linkages to community destinations, likely demand and cost.

This resource lets you see the location and descriptions of the works. For example, the paths priority list last year showed me that, in Belconnen town centre, the stretch of College Street between Chandler Street and Benjamin Way was a priority for upgrades and, sure enough, that work was completed in early 2017. There are also more detailed documents listing the current contractor works packages which specify the exact location and types of works being undertaken. It is extremely useful to have a central place where the public can find information about what the plans are for footpaths around the city. If someone has identified a problem footpath they can consult this register to see if upgrades are planned and, if not, they are able to report the issue through fix my street.

Coming from Queensland, which ranges from very hot to slightly less very hot, I was in awe of Canberra's seasonal changes when I moved down here. When my first autumn arrived I was blown away by the tree-lined streets that burst with reds, oranges and yellows. Of course, I soon learnt to soak up the beauty while I could, because it does not take long until all those leaves have hit the streets. In short, when I moved to Canberra I learnt about deciduous trees and then I learnt about leaf blowers.

I also found out that the ACT government ensures that each street in Canberra is swept at least twice a year. Suburbs with more deciduous trees are swept more often. Kaleen, for example, is swept three times a year and Ainslie gets swept five times. Many of us just wake up and notice that our street somehow looks different or improved. For those wanting to be better informed, the schedule is available online. These schedules are, and indeed should be, informed by community engagement—not deputising but community engagement—so that services meet the public's expectations.

The better suburbs campaign, which was launched yesterday, will help to make our city services even better, and I was very pleased to join the minister and Ms Orr at that launch yesterday. The campaign will give the public an opportunity to provide input on how they would like their suburbs to look, feel and operate in the future. Canberrans will be able to have their say about where and how TCCS should be expending its very great effort. And, given the comments of Ms Lee and Ms Lawder and given that they have some views on this, I trust that they will be engaging very solidly in this process. The government's commitment to community engagement and transparency in the delivery of services ensures that Canberrans understand how decisions about their suburbs are made and how services are targeted in the best possible way.

It is wonderful to live in a city like Canberra, where the residents care about making sure that the surroundings are maintained well, that the roads and paths are clean and safe, that the streets are swept and that the grass is mown. I commend the ACT government, and in particular the TCCS workers, for their untiring efforts to keep Canberra beautiful and safe for our community. I admire the work done to make the details of maintenance work accessible and transparent wherever possible. I encourage all Canberrans to make the most of this wealth of information. I commend the motion as amended.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (6.39), in reply: I would like to thank all members for their words on the motion and note that, hopefully, the debate is indicative of the great conversation we will be having with the community about how we can better service our suburbs.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## Guiding and scouting

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (6.39): I wish to note some of the great celebrations and events that have recently been undertaken by the ACT Girl Guides and Scouting movements. In July I attended the *Canberra Gang Show*. The *Gang Show* is an annual event held each year and gives cast members an opportunity to learn to express themselves with confidence and to be self-reliant while others involved in the *Gang Show* actively learn technical and stagecraft skills. This year marked the 50th anniversary of the *Canberra Gang Show*, and the theme, “Gang Show musical: a celebration of 50 years”, aptly recognised this milestone.

Ninety Scouts and Guides from the ages of 10½ to 30 years participated in this year’s show. I was told they all committed to a hectic rehearsal schedule in addition to their normal scouting and guiding activities. The commitment and enthusiasm was evident, and I, along with the other audience members, was thoroughly entertained.

Across two days in late August, over 1,200 young people aged from six to 30 years from the scout and guiding movements came together out at Camp Cottermouth to participate in SciScouts 2017. The theme this year was “Trees, bees and seeds”. The event gave every Scout and Guide the chance to participate in over 20 hands-on science activities, aligning with the themes of the world scout environment badge: clean water, natural habitats, minimising harmful substances, sustainability and natural hazards.

Activities on the day included building model solar cars with the help of the ANU Sol Invictus solar car team, learning about biodiversity and food webs from representatives from Mulligans Flat, counting macro-invertebrates with ACT Waterwatch, seeing how bushfires spread and are extinguished with the ACT Rural Fire Service, and much more.

The SciScouts project aims to reach an entirely new audience not traditionally reached by science engagement programs, and young people who, by their nature, are eager to investigate and learn new things. This is the third year of the project. Previous events have included an astronomy night at Mount Stromlo Observatory in 2015 and a chemistry day at the ANU Research School of Chemistry in 2016. This year's theme of "Environment" was specifically requested by last year's participants. Based on the enthusiasm on the day, it is safe to say that the goal of giving young people a chance to inquire and learn about science in a hands-on way was overwhelmingly achieved.

On 10 September, I had the pleasure of joining the Girl Guides at their presentation day. The day is a celebration of Guides who have achieved their junior BP award, BP award or Queen's Guide award. Recipients of the awards are presented with their award, and their achievements are formally acknowledged. To achieve these awards, Guides set themselves a challenge to be carried out to the best of their ability. The challenge might be something they have never done before; something they learn to do in a better way; something they really do not like doing; or something that requires a particular standard to be met.

This year 26 Guides received awards. It was great to hear from the Guides about all the varied things they had challenged themselves to do. Qian Vizjak, who received her junior BP award, participated in relay for life and realised she could walk 50 kilometres and raise more than \$700 for a good cause. Qian also learned to ride a unicycle, saw seals on Kangaroo Island for the first time, and collected books to donate to the doctors surgery to replace their old, shabby ones.

Amelie Allen, who received the BP award, organised and ran a World Centres night for her unit. Amelie also took part in orienteering and found that she really liked it. She now orienteers each weekend with her grandpa. Amelie noted that until you try something you will not know if you like it, and recommended that we all try new things.

Nicole Georgopoulos received the Queen's Guide award with an outdoor focus. She earned the camping trefoil 3 for indoor camping by running a camp at Jindabyne; then she further challenged herself to complete the trefoil 3 for outdoor camping by facilitating a camp at Bowning.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of Girl Guides in the ACT. As part of the birthday celebrations, Girl Guides ACT have organised a series of activities. One of these activities has, today, brought Girl Guides to the Legislative Assembly to meet members and discuss all the work that Girl Guides groups are doing locally, nationally and internationally. I, along with many of my colleagues, had the pleasure

of meeting with the Guides and hearing all they had to say. As you can imagine from the events and celebrations I have just spoken of, there is plenty going on in the guiding and scouting movements.

### **Male privilege**

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee) (6.44): I would like to talk about some of the comments that were made earlier in the day by Mr Parton when he donned his red cap and launched his leadership bid to make Canberra great again. The statement “If you are a heterosexual, employed, white male over the age of 30, you are not really included in anything” is a rally call reminiscent of another place. I am not sure the message resonates in the ACT, but that is not for me to judge, and I will now defer to the community to decide. This is a very dangerous experiment.

I will call this my voluntary, non-binding vox pop from ABC Canberra’s Facebook site, where an article on Mr Parton’s comments was posted earlier today. Madam Speaker, the comments flowed in. The first comment was: “Thank goodness for Virginia Haussegger.” That refers to Ms Haussegger’s comments that Mr Parton’s comments were “foolish” and “offensive to all those not part of that privileged class”. Another comment was: “And yet there he is—white, employed, male, probably heterosexual, over 30 standing in the legislative assembly surrounded by quite a few others in the same category making decisions and having a say.” Yet another comment was: “Gee Mark Parton”—this is from a male—“you have really led a secluded life. When I was thirty, I was still playing cricket, going to soccer with my daughter ... I was proudly carrying my newest daughter around. There are many things you can do to feel included. Don’t grandstand.” Another comment was: “Ah the old turn it around and play the victim card. The church is good at this, quick to comment and impose its rule and beliefs, but also quick to play the victim card when the roles are reversed.” Then we had some other comments that suggested that this might have been a little bit of satire. “Please tell me this is an article taken from the *Beetoota Advocate*,” one person said. Another one said, “Yeah those guys really do it tough.” And then there is the final comment that I will mention this evening: “Wow how can they be excluded when they control almost everything in this country?”

They are just some of the comments responding to Mr Parton’s comments in the chamber earlier today.

Mr Parton has put his foot in his mouth before. In the past, he backflipped on his intrusive suggestion that the Strava cycling app should be used to catch speeding cyclists. Based on comments from the community today in relation to his comments in the chamber, this might be another statement worthy of a backflip.

Mr Parton, I just want to touch upon one area in which heterosexual white males over the age of 30 are included, and that is the institution of marriage. I want to say this to you: same-sex marriage is an area where we really do genuinely appreciate your support in terms of the yes vote. I have acknowledged that publicly and, in an unqualified way, at a yes campaign event as well. The yes campaign will continue to accept advocates from all walks of life, even if they do not use the right language, and that is important.

But I am just letting you know—one white male to another—that saying over and over again that you are sick to death of talking about this issue is a bit patronising and is dismissive of the importance of this issue for the thousands of LGBTIQ Canberrans who have been waiting years and decades for their relationships to be recognised just like every other Australian.

People in the LGBTIQ community will fight for their rights regardless of whether or not someone that can get married is sick of the issue. One of the people who can say that they are genuinely tired is Senator Penny Wong. She said this on Q&A this week, not because she has endured appearances on Q&A with Tony Jones 18 times, but because every time she has come on there she has had to explain why her relationship should have the same status as everyone else's.

I commend this motion to adjourn the Assembly's proceedings this evening so that I can leave and go and help on the yes campaign; I will be assisting on their phone bank this evening.

### **Breast screening**

**MS CODY** (Murrumbidgee) (6.48): I rise today to draw awareness to breast screening and to BreastScreen ACT. Today I went along to BreastScreen ACT and had my regular two-yearly check-up. It is very important for all women to ensure that they look after their breasts and do their regular checks. BreastScreen ACT offers free screening and follow-up services for all women over 40 years of age living in the ACT. Unfortunately, I am one of those women.

Being over 40 has its benefits, but sometimes its downsides. Breast screening in the ACT is done through digital mammography, which is a low-dose breast X-ray. Those who are a little worried need not be. I went through it today. It is quite painless, but marginally uncomfortable.

We have had some very high profile women in Australia and around the world who have fought breast cancer, some successfully; unfortunately, some, like Canberra's Connie Johnson, not successfully. It is really important that the ACT's free breast screening offered to all women is taken up by all women.

If women in Canberra notice any changes in their boobs, whether it be a lump, nipple discharge, a change in size or shape, an unusual persistent pain or a change in the skin such as dimpling, puckering or redness, I encourage them to seek medical advice as soon as possible and to continue to be vigilant about checking your breasts.

For women aged 40 years and over, it is not as vital; there is not as much evidence out there to show regular breast screening is something that is important. However, BreastScreen ACT believes that it is important and is offering it as a free service to all women over 40 in the ACT. Women between the ages of 50 and 74 should get notified of their free screening every two years. There has been a huge difference in ensuring the early detection of breast cancer, which means longevity for those patients.

So I encourage all women in Canberra to, as I did today, jump on the phone and call 132050 to make an appointment. For those women who may not have the courage to go alone, because it can be a scary process, you can make group bookings. If you want to get a group of girlfriends together and then go for lunch afterwards, I say, “Do it!” I again encourage women in the ACT to get your boobs out, check them well and give BreastScreen ACT a call.

### **Volunteering in schools**

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (6.52): My children are enrolled in three different ACT schools. I am grateful that they get to grow up with easy access to quality education. We parents understand personally the role education plays in growing strong individuals who can think critically, reason logically and act for themselves, even, perhaps especially, when that means not blindly following the crowd.

Essential to the educational enterprise are many dedicated, hard-working teachers. My children have overwhelmingly been taught by capable and passionate professionals who accelerate their students’ personal development and instil in them a love of learning that will last a lifetime.

Today I pay tribute to these teachers. We have always asked much of our teachers: to instruct, to guide, to provide gentle but effective discipline, to create engaging learning environments and so forth. In recent years many have argued that we have begun to ask too much of our teachers, often leaving them overworked and underappreciated.

A recent national survey of 2,000 teachers found that 73 per cent of them thought their workloads had noticeably increased just in the past year. More than two-thirds of those surveyed said that they were working more than 46 hours a week and nearly one-quarter of them reported working more than 55 hours a week.

As a result of these and other pressures, almost one in five schoolteachers is currently looking to leave the profession, according to the findings of another study. Because teachers now have to do so many additional tasks at school, they are often left doing much of their prepping and marking at home. This same study found that Australian teachers on average spent 20 per cent of their holidays either going into work or working from home.

I have tried to support the teachers at my children’s schools however I could. I have volunteered to read to kids one morning each week before the school day started and I have helped with various school events—cooking, serving and cleaning. Being engaged through my children’s schools has always felt like the right thing to do, and I am grateful that I have been able to be involved.

I therefore felt disappointed to read in last Saturday’s *Canberra Times* about the volunteering crisis that is affecting a large number of Canberra schools. Nearly half of the territory’s P&Cs are struggling to fill all committee positions and three college

P&Cs have folded over the past four years. A lack of volunteers has already impacted things like sports and fetes, and a decline in volunteer fundraising will hurt the provision of essential materials in schools. All this is in addition to the work volunteers do directly to support teachers.

A number of possible factors contributing to this decline has been identified. One main factor is lack of time. Cost of living rises in Canberra such as increases in rates, rents and fees have hit average families especially hard, reducing the time that parents have available to lend a hand at school. Other factors include increasing bureaucratic requirements such as needing a food handling certification to run a fundraising barbecue.

The Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools, the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, Volunteering and Contact ACT and the Canberra Preschool Society have joined forces to try to reverse this worrying trend. They are currently running a survey on SurveyMonkey.com called “volunteering in ACT schools” to see whether they can more clearly identify the pitfalls, difficulties and barriers faced by potential volunteers.

I encourage all parents of ACT schoolchildren and other concerned community members to contribute to this effort by completing the online survey. Whenever and however possible, please find the time to serve a local school. Our teachers need our help and our kids need our help.

### **Belconnen town centre**

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (6.56): I rise today to put on the record my concern about some decisions affecting jobs and, in turn, workers and residents in Belconnen. The first of these is the announcement that the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation is moving out of Cameron Offices in the Belconnen town centre to offices in the city. While I note this is a move within the same city and does not fall under the very concerning decentralisation announcement, I need to underline that any movement of offices out of the town centre does have a real effect on people’s lives. I am very concerned that there has been little public notice given about this move to allow the community more broadly to properly understand, appreciate and even debate what is proposed to occur. The furtive way that management has gone about this is a real cause for concern.

I will share with the Assembly a handful of the anonymised comments provided to me from CSC workers about the effect the move has on them. First:

We have a young family with kids in day care, we live and work in Belconnen. Our current arrangements allow us to arrange the day so we both have some flextime to cover the unexpected, and coordinate the drop off and pick up to day care. That balance won’t be possible with the extra travel time into the City.

Another:

I'm a dad and I coach soccer and cricket with my local teams after school. To maintain my current activities three afternoons a week I will need to get to work 90 minutes earlier every day.

Another:

I have car pooled with neighbours for years, which won't be practical next year.

Yet another:

I have walked to work every day for many years. Next year that will not be possible so I lose my walk and pay out \$1,500 a year in bus fares.

Another:

My current arrangements give me a workplace close to home and family. I have medical and family commitments between and the difference in the cost of parking on my wage is huge.

And another:

The time is the biggest factor, hours of extra travel every week.

This is the impact on people who work at CSC, not taking into account the broader impact on the surrounding businesses in the town centre. While I appreciate that Cameron Offices may not be the ideal workplace for public servants I note that there is ample other office space which I would expect would be or could become fit for purpose and I call on the CSC to explain whether they have taken this into account and the enormous costs to their workers' lives in their decision to move to the city.

Finally, there has been some concern expressed by the community about the recent announcement that Myer is closing. Again I am concerned, about the jobs at Myer and the workers attached to them, many of them Belconnen locals. However, I also note that the closure of Myer is an issue with Myer as a business and it is not a reflection of Westfield Belconnen, Belconnen town centre or the broader Canberra community or its economy. Last night the centre group shared with the Belconnen Community Council a comment on the closure of Myer which is important to put on the record tonight. And for those who do not know, the centre group manager is Westfield:

The Myer closure at Westfield Belconnen will not come into effect until mid-2019, effectively giving us two years to do what is a normal part of our business—which is to continually update our retail offer to ensure its appeal to customers. Their departure will enable us to introduce new retailers—both local and international—into our centre in 2020—allowing our offer to remain fresh and relevant.

So I think, while the closure is concerning and the community has a right to be concerned, we can be assured that the Canberra economy is still going strong and

these workers will have both the time and the opportunity to find new employment and that Westfield will be filling the gap left by Myers in two years time. While I am really quite distressed about what has happened at CSC and I think, mostly for nostalgic reasons, I am very sad about Myer leaving as well, I am very hopeful for the town centre's future and I have recently written to businesses encouraging them to consider my proposal for a town centre showcase or market day. I am very pleased with the responses I have received to that idea so far and I encourage other businesses to contact me if they would like to get involved.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 7.01 pm.**