



Debates

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Wednesday, 11 April 2018

Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018	1209
<i>Apollo 11</i> mission—50th anniversary	1213
Government—revenue from greyhound racing	1225
Visitors	1229
Government—revenue from greyhound racing	1229
Renewable energy targets	1239
Questions without notice:	
Land—Dickson purchase	1252
ACTION bus service—pets	1253
Domestic animal services—dogs	1253
Light rail—stage 1 construction	1254
Greyhound racing—draft code of practice	1256
ACT Health—proposed organisational changes	1256
Housing—affordability	1257
ACT Health—proposed organisational changes	1259
ACT Health—former director-general	1260
Government—heritage grants	1260
ACT Health—proposed organisational changes	1263
ACT Health—data review	1263
Drugs—pill testing	1264
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm	1264
Tourism—economic impact	1265
Recycling—container deposit scheme	1266
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Gaming—consumer privacy	1268
Children and young people—adoptions	1269
Answer to question without notice:	
Planning—O’Malley	1270
Renewable energy targets	1270
ACTION bus service—school services	1275
Public housing—supply	1289
Blood donation regulations	1299
Privilege—alleged breach	1313
Privileges 2018—Select Committee	1314
Adjournment:	
Project Booyah	1320
Yogie awards	1320
Mr Myuran Sukumaran—art exhibition	1322
Hawker Primary School fete	1323
Girls take over parliament	1324
<i>Forbes Asia</i> 30 under 30	1324

Wednesday, 11 April 2018

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

Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018

Ms Le Couteur, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.00): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

This bill seeks to insert a positive, affirmative definition of consent into the Crimes Act. Last year I introduced the invasion of privacy bill, which covered both intimate images and consent issues. There was a lot of discussion around the issue of consent, including from the Human Rights Commission. So I made a commitment to conduct more consultation on it, and in March I tabled an exposure draft of the bill.

Following the consultation on the exposure draft, including a detailed discussion paper and considerable stakeholder feedback, I am confident that the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill I am tabling today meets the needs and expectations of key stakeholders and the broader community.

Tabling this legislation today is also the first step in implementing one of the outstanding Australian Law Reform Commission recommendations from the 2010 report into family violence. It is also an item in the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement.

In 2010 the Australian Law Reform Commission report into family violence stated that, with the exception of the ACT, every Australian jurisdiction had a statutory definition of consent based on one of the following formulations: free agreement, free and voluntary agreement, or consent freely and voluntarily given.

The commission made a specific recommendation in their report that all states and territories should have a positive definition of consent based on these principles. Both ACT Labor and the ACT Greens considered this so important that the commitment to implement the outstanding ALRC recommendations on sexual assault was part of our parliamentary agreement. The ACT is the only jurisdiction that does not have a positive definition of consent in its legislation. The bill will align the ACT with other states.

Of course, while the bill is only one of many steps needed to address the harm experienced by victims of sexual violence, it is a step towards affirming that the community believes survivors of sexual violence and that they are validated and supported when they approach the criminal justice system.

In reading the submissions received on the exposure draft of this legislation, and during the consultation process on my invasion of privacy bill last year, I was struck time and again by just how difficult it is for survivors of sexual assault to seek out and receive justice for the crimes perpetrated against them. As noted in the recent submission by the ACT Council of Social Service, survivors are impeded from reporting sexual assault because of the perceived and actual difficulties in successful prosecution. Not only that; accessing the justice system can often re-traumatise victims.

The definition of consent has a central function in determining the outcome of a sexual assault case. In the majority of cases, there is no physical evidence or impartial witness. The focus of the trial is thus on the competing evidence of the complainant and the defendant about whether or not the sexual activity was consensual. Our legal system's approach to sexual offences remains inadequate, despite the considerable headway the ACT government has made over recent years to improve this matter. Unjust outcomes in the court in turn reinforce rape myths and perpetuate patterns of non-reporting by victims and non-enforcement of sexual assault laws by police, prosecutors and trial judges in subsequent cases.

Just a few weeks ago I was disappointed to read some of the comments in a report by the *Canberra Times* about a recent sexual assault case in the ACT. The female complainant was described by the defendant's counsel as being "utterly discredited" and her evidence as "no more than plausible". According to the comments in the article, she was discredited due to her apologetic manner of responding to the lawyer's questioning and even for the fact that she remained in the public gallery in the court following her testimony. I would really like to know how wanting to hear the proceedings from which you are seeking an outcome can be regarded as in any way a character flaw.

By contrast, when the defendant was criticised for being too good a witness, his lawyer stated, "He's not a professional witness; he's a soldier." When he was acquitted of the charges, on leaving the court he said, "I can't wait to get on with my life and my career in the Army." But the article did not have anything from the complainant. I can well understand why, under the circumstances, she did not want to say anything to the media. But this means that, once again, the voice of the alleged assault victim is silent. We hear only one point of view. I am not in a position to comment on the facts of the case or in any way to suggest that I am questioning the verdict, but all this does is bring up again that sexual assault is a gendered issue. It is an area where greater clarification is definitely needed.

We should remember, of course, that men can also be victims of sexual assault and other assault. According to the 2017 ABS personal safety survey, men are more likely to have experienced non-sexual violence since the age of 15. But the statistics show that more often women are the victims of sexual assault and more often it is perpetrated by men. One in five women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, whilst for men this figure is one in 20—still too high, of course. The same ABS survey showed that 87 per cent of women were most likely to experience sexual assault by a male they knew. The location was most likely to be in the respondent's

home—that is in 40 per cent of cases—or the perpetrator’s home, in 17 per cent of cases. Sadly, the majority of women—87 per cent—did not contact the police.

These are shocking figures. That as recently as last year only one person out of every 10 who experienced sexual violence sought help from the police is appalling. It just shows how mistakenly naive and accepting we as a society are of what happens behind closed doors and in other people’s homes.

When I was younger there was a major campaign to say that “No means no” as far as consent goes. Of course, it still does. It may seem crazy to some younger people, but that actually has not always been a widely understood concept. Arguably, as the statistics show for sexual violence, it still is not for some people.

Arguably, we have come some way since that time. One advancement, of course, is that marital rape is no longer a legal defence. This is a critical step in addressing what we know is the most prevalent form of sexual assault—intimate partner sexual violence. As the statistics I cited before show, victims of sexual assault are more likely to be assaulted by someone they know in their house or the home of the perpetrator.

Compounding this risk is the risk of vulnerable groups of women. One example is that women with disabilities are between four and 10 times more likely to have experienced sexual assault than non-disabled women. As put forward by the submission from Women with Disabilities ACT:

The very nature of disability means that women with disabilities will always experience a power imbalance in relation to the perpetrator and ... this power imbalance extends into justice itself if they make a disclosure.

On a positive note, I am pleased to say this submission notes that the bill supports the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 16, freedom from violence, exploitation and abuse, and that the proposed changes would lead to better legal outcomes and protection of women with disabilities from sexual exploitation and abuse.

The evidence from the many attendees at the recent Domestic Violence Prevention Council extraordinary meeting, which was attended by my staff and many others—I was unfortunately away on committee business—is that we have turned a corner in acknowledging and addressing domestic violence in public discourse. This is, in turn, encouraging these victims to speak out.

Two very impressive women spoke at that meeting about their personal studies and struggles to overcome abuse. There is still much to be done. It is too difficult for many of us to contemplate, let alone even acknowledge or speak about in many cases. The #MeToo movement and End Rape on Campus Australia, which are looking into this issue, are demonstrating that as a community we can, in fact, acknowledge and talk about these issues.

There is positive change. When I grew up, the fairytale role model was Sleeping Beauty, who was rescued by Prince Charming. In this story, of course, consent by the passive Sleeping Beauty was 100 per cent assumed by the dashing prince. She was asleep. But one of my staff told me that in more recent Disney films the topic of consent is making headway. To quote from the unlikely hero and love interest, Kristoff, in *Frozen*: “I could kiss you. I mean, I’d like to. May I?” And Anna, the heroine, replies with an unequivocal yes.

Disney is arguably the archetypal platform for gender stereotyping. We all think of the pretty princesses who have been rescued by the handsome princes and have had no thought whatsoever about what happily ever after might actually look like in real life. So if Disney can move forward on this issue—they did that five years ago, no less—it is really time that our progressive territory embraced free and voluntarily given consent that is not only assumed but equally sought out and affirmed.

I now return to the key issues addressed in the bill. In citing the Australian Law Reform Commission, the YWCA submission to the exposure draft consultation on this bill clearly articulates my primary aim in addressing the issue of consent—that is, to create a definition of consent based on the concept of agreement and “to protect the sexual autonomy and freedom of choice of two adults”.

I have also taken care to ensure that the rights of young people are not overlooked in the proposed changes to the legislation. In developing this bill, I have considered section 22 of the ACT Human Rights Act 2004, which states that everybody charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. My bill is based on feedback from the Human Rights Commission, and we have worked with them to ensure that our legislation both improves the definition of consent and meets our human rights obligations. On balance, I believe that the proposed legislation does not unduly burden the right to be presumed innocent and provides appropriate safeguards to ensure that people are not convicted merely because they are unable to overcome an unreasonable burden of proof. I hope that this legislation will, if passed, benefit all people and begin to level the playing field.

My sincerest thanks to those who made submissions to the consultation on this bill and provided verbal feedback. In no particular order, I wish to thank the ACT Council of Social Service, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, the ANU Women’s Department, Legal Aid ACT, the Women’s Centre for Health Matters, the ACT LGBTIQ Ministerial Advisory Council, Women with Disabilities ACT, the Youth Coalition of the ACT, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, the ACT Human Rights Commission, YWCA Canberra, Professor Patricia Easteal and Georgia O’Dea.

I offer my sincere thanks again to all those who argued so strongly to address this issue last year. The work of these individuals and organisations is what enables our society to address injustice in the community. The examples of flexibility, adaptability and forward thinking, in particular in the not-for-profit sector and in law reform, mean that we can tackle the issues that bureaucracies often cannot. It is crucial that we, as members of the Legislative Assembly and the government, work to support the sector to continue to do this work and to listen to what they have to say.

The legislation that I am tabling today is part of a bigger process—not simply, of course, because it has to be ratified by the majority of my colleagues in this place but because it is hopefully part of the worldwide cultural shift. Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Apollo 11 mission—50th anniversary

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.16): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) 21 July 2019 will be the 50th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, where mankind first walked on the moon;
- (b) the Apollo 11 landing on the moon is arguably one of the greatest achievements in modern history;
- (c) the Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station and Tidbinbilla Tracking Station (now Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex (CDSCC)) in the ACT, played a significant role in the Apollo 11 (and other) space missions, with the first footage of man walking on the moon broadcast throughout the world from Honeysuckle Creek;
- (d) the ACT has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the space tracking industry through a number of sites and over more than 50 years; and
- (e) a number of people who have worked in the space tracking industry in the ACT are still alive and the 50th anniversary is a fitting and significant time to recognise and honour their contribution; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) support the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Apollo 11 mission through financial and other assistance;
- (b) install a significant tribute and commemoration to the space tracking industry in the ACT through an artwork or similar in the ACT in time for the 50th anniversary;
- (c) investigate ways to provide recognition of space tracking history and contribution in the ACT, including through supporting:
 - (i) digitalising records, including audio records and digitising original paper records;
 - (ii) publishing records;
 - (iii) events;
 - (iv) physical works at Honeysuckle Creek, Orroral Valley, and CDSCC at Tidbinbilla; and
 - (v) other activities, in collaboration with other relevant bodies, in time for the 50th anniversary; and

- (d) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day of 2018 on the ACT Government's contribution to and support for the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Next year, 2019, is the 50th anniversary of what is often said to be the greatest technological achievement of humankind in the 20th century, if not of all time—the *Apollo 11* lunar landing. For those old enough, the memory of watching those grainy black and white images of Neil Armstrong stepping down on to the surface of the moon was, for many of us, a powerful and defining moment of our lives. I remember I was in the early stages of primary school in Queensland, in Brisbane, at that time. Television was new to Queensland at that time and the school got in a television set especially for classes to sit around and watch the lunar landing. It was a very exciting moment on many fronts.

It is especially useful for us to be talking about this commemorative event, this important international as well as local event, as we approach heritage week because it is also reflective of our heritage. *Apollo 11*, of course, was the first spacecraft to land on the moon with people on board. The mission commander, Neil Armstrong, and pilot Buzz Aldrin, both from the USA, landed in the lunar module *Eagle* on 20 July 1969. Neil Armstrong then became the first human to step on to the lunar surface, six hours after landing, on 21 July. Buzz Aldrin joined him about 20 minutes later.

Armstrong and Aldrin spent about two and a quarter hours on the surface of the moon outside of the spacecraft and collected about 20 kilos of lunar material to bring back to earth. In fact, three pieces of the moon rock collected have been presented at various times to Australia. One is on display at the Tidbinbilla space tracking station, or its more formal title the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin spent just under a day on the moon surface, and the third member of the *Apollo 11* crew, Michael Collins, piloted the command module, *Columbia*, alone in lunar orbit while Armstrong and Aldrin were on the moon surface.

Apollo 11 was launched by a *Saturn V* rocket from Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on 16 July and was the fifth manned mission of NASA's *Apollo* program. All three astronauts returned safely to earth and landed in the Pacific Ocean on 24 July. The landing was also broadcast on live TV to a worldwide audience.

Those famous words have echoed throughout the years since then, when Neil Armstrong stepped down on to the surface of the moon and said:

That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.

That is something we have heard over and over on television broadcasts of the event since that time. *Apollo 11* fulfilled a national goal proposed in 1961 by the then US President John F Kennedy:

... before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth.

What many people know, but certainly not everyone, is that Australia and the ACT in particular played a vital part in the *Apollo 11* mission. Contrary to the movie *The Dish*, which portrayed the Parkes radio telescope as receiving the signals from the moon landing, it was actually the Honeysuckle Creek station located just outside of Canberra that received the famous first footage from the moon. A 26-metre dish was then located at Honeysuckle Creek. It was later moved to Tidbinbilla space tracking station and it is now decommissioned, and that was the very antenna which received and relayed to the entire world the historic first TV images of Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon on 21 July 1969.

Apart from the television footage they provided, Honeysuckle Creek and Tidbinbilla space tracking stations had voice and telemetry contact with the lunar and command modules. The images that came from Honeysuckle Creek tracking station were sent direct to OTC Sydney by Williamsdale and Deakin. The images were then selected by NASA for broadcast to the world.

At the conclusion of the *Apollo* moon missions in 1972 Honeysuckle Creek began supporting regular *Skylab* passes, the *Apollo* scientific stations left on the moon by astronauts, and assisting the deep space network with interplanetary tracking commitments. In 1974 at the conclusion of the *Skylab* program Honeysuckle Creek joined the deep space network as Deep Space Station 44, or DSS44.

Honeysuckle Creek closed in December 1981, and that was when the 26-metre antenna that had been used in the moon landings was relocated to the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex at nearby Tidbinbilla, and it was renamed Deep Space Station 46, or DSS46. It remained in use until late 2009. It is still located there at Tidbinbilla. If you visit the tracking station it is immediately behind the public car park at the visitors centre. It is still very visible, even though it has been decommissioned. In May 2010 the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics declared the antenna a historical aerospace site, so the antenna will remain in place at the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex in perpetuity as a historic site.

Many of the people who worked at the space tracking station in the ACT during the lunar missions are still alive, and some of them still live in the ACT. The upcoming 50th anniversary is a fitting and significant time to recognise and honour their contribution. I understand an *Apollo 11* 50th anniversary committee has been established, largely by ex-staff of the ACT tracking stations, led by John Saxon, with support from Hamish Lindsay, Mike Dinn and others, all of whom worked at those tracking stations, and specifically Honeysuckle Creek, during the *Apollo 11* mission.

My motion recommends that this Assembly appropriately prepares for the *Apollo 11* 50th anniversary next year to recognise the important part that the ACT played in this global historic event. I know this small committee of ex-staff is working on a range of ideas, many of which are already underway. Their ideas include possible sculpture, a movie, dinners, visits by astronauts and a walk of fame around the original Honeysuckle Creek dish.

It would also be good if the third moon rock in Australia was put on public display. One is on display at the Tidbinbilla space tracking station visitors centre, one is in Sydney at the Powerhouse Museum, but the third is not currently on public view. It is held by the National Archives. This moon rock was presented to Prime Minister Harold Holt at the now Old Parliament House in 1970 by the US Vice-President, Spiro Agnew. With appropriate security and other controls, it would be great if this moon rock could be put on public display.

One of the important parts of my motion is about installing a significant tribute and commemoration to the space tracking industry in the ACT through an artwork or similar in the ACT, in time for the 50th anniversary. In my discussions with the organising committee of ex-staff of the tracking station, they have indicated that they would like this to be in the city area so that visitors to Canberra as well as locals could see it and understand the role the ACT played in the space tracking industry. It may inspire future generations to participate in such technological advances.

I note the ACT is already looking to further its participation in the space industry. This is a way of bringing a new generation of science and technology people into the space tracking industry. It is something we have a proud history of here in the ACT, back to when then Prime Minister Robert Menzies instigated the space tracking industry in the ACT, recognising the technological advances that could be held here and the use of higher education in the ACT and IT and other technological advances. He saw it as a way to bring employment to the ACT that did not involve manufacturing or other types of industry but something that was very much knowledge based. Over the years, hundreds if not thousands of people have worked in the space tracking industry.

There were previously three space tracking stations in the ACT: Honeysuckle Creek, Orroral Valley and, of course, Tidbinbilla. Tidbinbilla is the only one remaining that is still in operation. Tidbinbilla is one of three tracking stations around the world that are part of the deep space network, the others being at Goldstone in California and near Madrid in Spain. Any one of those tracking stations can receive signals and transmit signals to a spacecraft anywhere around our galaxy. So it is very important that we continue to acknowledge the work of those people.

To put not too fine a point on it, 50 years since the moon landing means that some of those people who worked there may not be around for too much longer. Many of them are in their 80s or older, and I think it is a fitting tribute to those staff as well as the ACT's proud history in the space tracking industry to provide support for these commemorative events and highlight to our citizens in the ACT, to Australia as a whole and to the world, our important part in this historic event.

The motion recommends that this Assembly and the ACT government appropriately prepare for the *Apollo 11* 50th anniversary next year. I seek the support of the Assembly for this motion to celebrate the anniversary of Australia's and the ACT's part in the historic *Apollo 11* mission 50 years ago.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.28): I thank Ms Lawder for this motion and I am very supportive of the proposal. I do have a couple of amendments, though, which I seek leave to move together now.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: I move:

(1) After paragraph (1)(e), insert:

“(f) the important role played by the ACT is recognised through the heritage listing of the Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station, Orroral Valley Tracking Station and the Orroral Geodetic Observatory;”.

(2) Omit paragraphs (2)(a) and (b), substitute:

“(a) support the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Apollo 11 mission and continue working with stakeholders, including former tracking station employees, Tidbinbilla Deep Space Communication Complex, NASA and the Australian National University, on a celebration;

(b) work with stakeholders on possible options for an artwork or similar to commemorate the space tracking industry in the ACT in time for the 50th anniversary;”.

The amendments support what Ms Lawder intends to do today. Also, they acknowledge the ex-staffers in planning for the event. As we know, it is a very important time in Canberra’s history. After talking to the group last year, after the anniversary, I gave some instructions to heritage to start to work up a package for the 50th anniversary.

Humankind reached the heights of technical achievement on 21 July 1969, when we placed our first footprints on the moon. The famed lunar module *Eagle* landed on the surface of the moon, with barely 30 seconds of fuel remaining, at 4.17 pm Eastern Daylight Time. It was recorded somewhat differently in the Honeysuckle logs, which I will go to a little bit later. Astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped off the landed spacecraft and onto the surface of the moon, heralding a new era in modern history.

The lunar landings captured the imagination of the entire world. Once upon a time, the idea of landing on the moon was the stuff of storybooks, but with *Apollo 11* the impossible became real. Neil Armstrong remarked that the need to explore the moon was part of humankind’s need for self-discovery and that it was in the nature of the human being to face challenges.

The international space race was a rare case where there were moments of mutual respect between the communist Soviet Union and the United States during a geopolitically tense time in modern history. In 1960 the United States and Australia signed an agreement under which Australia established and operated a number of tracking stations which would form part of worldwide networks under the control of

the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA. By 1967 three of these new tracking stations were located in the ACT. As we have heard, these were Tidbinbilla tracking station, now called the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex; Honeysuckle Creek tracking station for MSFN, the manned spaceflight network; and Orroral Valley tracking station, which is no longer active, for STADAN, the space tracking and data acquisition network.

Honeysuckle Creek tracking station played a pivotal role in the *Apollo 11* moon landing, most notably broadcasting the first images of the event to the world. Footage of Neil Armstrong's first steps was relayed to the Honeysuckle Creek tracking station through a lunar camera. That footage was then filmed from a monitor using a standard camera and was able to be broadcast around the globe.

What often is not talked about is the event support done by the Postmaster-General's Department across Australia. Indeed, my father played a vital role in that. He was in charge of the communications cable from Honeysuckle Creek to Deakin and then on to NASA. I was proud to have the opportunity to join him at the console for the moon landing. It was a very proud moment. In appreciation of the work that he did, he was presented with the Apollo achievement award, which I now table for the Assembly. I present the following paper:

Apollo Achievement Award—Walter Neville Gentleman, presented by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

It was fantastic for a young person to be involved in that.

The Tidbinbilla tracking station, too, was important to the mission, acting as a wing station to Honeysuckle Creek. To this day Tidbinbilla tracking station, now CDSCC, continues to capture vital information on missions in deep space. Of course, no space flight mission carrying a person would have been possible without the ground-breaking work of the Orroral Valley tracking station, which was the largest tracking station of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

All three of the ACT's tracking stations are a reminder of the important role played by the territory in this industry and in this history. Even those stations which have been decommissioned tell the story of our contribution to space exploration and missions, including the people on board. Modern space exploration saw the ACT participate in remarkable advances in a field of technology that united humanity.

In 2016 the ACT Heritage Council recognised the ACT's contribution by heritage listing Honeysuckle Creek tracking station and Orroral Valley tracking station. These important places are now recognised and protected under the ACT heritage legislation.

The ACT government recognises the ongoing contribution of those who worked in the space tracking industry to the ACT and our region. The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate values the guidance and enthusiasm of Philip Clark, Hamish Lindsay and others who continue to volunteer their time and knowledge to projects and events related to the space tracking history of the ACT.

On the day of the moon landing, Lindsay recalls this sense of anticipation:

Honeysuckle Creek had finished all the testing and setting up, begun over five hours earlier at 6 am, and went into the H-30 count, 30 minutes to the signal from the spacecraft appearing on the horizon with moonrise. While a freezing-cold westerly wind dragged sleet over the valley, the 26 metre antenna dropped down to the horizon and waited, servos whining. Everybody and everything in the station was ready waiting, waiting for the first signs of a signal from the lunar spacecraft.

I will go to the Honeysuckle Creek log. These were unofficial logs but they were very well kept, and people from the ACT or elsewhere can have a look at the honeysucklecreek.net website if they want to have a look at these particular logs. The times on the log were done in US time. They started comms at 0244, 100 megahertz on the lunar module, EVA, EKG and LBR. At 0251 the commander was on the lunar module porch. At 0254 the TV was turned on. At 0256 the commander was on the moon. The log gives the different frequencies used in the communications and goes on in detail about the loss of signal sometimes. It then goes on to 0349, when President Nixon was uplinked to the moon landing so that he could talk directly to the astronauts.

In 2011 Philip Clark received an ACT heritage grant for \$14,900 to publish *Acquisition! The Story of Orroral Valley Space Tracking Station*. This stunning publication filled a unique gap in the ACT's heritage and history by recording the story of Orroral tracking station, one of the largest in the world. It made photographs, information, material and interviews not available elsewhere widely accessible to the ACT community.

I can assure Ms Lawder that I am committed to supporting the 50th anniversary celebrations of the *Apollo 11* mission. Applications for the 2018-19 round of the heritage grants program are now open. In this round projects that are preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the moon landing are a funding priority. The grants will provide \$345,000 to identify and carry out projects that promote and conserve the heritage of the ACT. Grant applications from individuals and community groups are encouraged. Additionally, the proposed theme of next year's Canberra and Region Heritage Festival is the 50th anniversary celebrations of *Apollo 11*.

Community projects that increase the amenity and awareness of heritage places are also a funding priority in the 2018-19 heritage grants program. Such places may include Honeysuckle Creek tracking station and Orroral Valley tracking station. Projects that achieve these aims through education of all ages, oral history, tourism, interpretation, digitalising records, and events will be afforded priority, especially if they relate to the 50th anniversary. The 50th anniversary can also be recognised through grants proposals involving community organisations and ACT government agencies.

Through collaboration with Craft ACT and the ACT parks and conservation service, we will be hosting a unique artist-in-residence program designed to celebrate this significant anniversary. Artists have found, time and again, that their practice is

profoundly altered by the experience of this residency program, which allows precious stillness, solitude and space for investigation, reflection and the generation of new work.

In 2019 we are honoured to have the Australian National University Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics, RSAA, as our research partner. Artists-in-residence will have the possibility to do research with the team from RSAA, with a special focus on themes surrounding the 50th anniversary of the *Apollo* moon landing. The research period will be followed by the residency period at Namadgi National Park, where the artist will have the use of a living and working space at Gudgenby Ready-Cut Cottage. Artists will be asked to engage with the community and participate in a public program, including an open day at the cottage. Resulting work from the artist-in-residency program will then be displayed in an exhibition in 2020.

As I have outlined, the 50th anniversary of the *Apollo* moon landing is considered to be very exciting and important. We have already put in place some actions to highlight this and continue to work with stakeholders on ways to commemorate this important event and to remind Canberrans and the world that the ACT played a part in this momentous event.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.39): I rise to support Ms Lawder's motion in principle, but I will be agreeing to Minister Gentleman's amendments. This motion is about heritage, so I think it is important that we start by acknowledging the Indigenous heritage of the sites at Tidbinbilla, Honeysuckle Creek and Orroral Valley. These places are on the traditional lands of the Ngannawal people, who have lived on the lands around the tracking stations for 25,000 years. The Birrigai rock shelter, a warm refuge from the cold blusters of spring and autumn in the Australian Alps, has been a warm-weather hunting camp for nearly 20,000 years, and it is not far from the Honeysuckle Creek site. This is a much longer heritage than the European heritage, and it is really important that we acknowledge that.

The tracking stations are also really important, as they are tangible representations that our city loves science, innovation and learning. They are physical sites, and they are important, obviously, as physical sites and physical representations. But it is really important that they are there, because they are a manifestation of a shared cultural heritage. It is a shared cultural heritage that brought my family to Canberra. I do not quite have the level of connection that Minister Gentleman has, but my father came to Canberra, to the ANU, to be the founding Professor of Theoretical Physics. It was science that brought us here, and he had an involvement with the tracking stations and the people involved with that.

It was an amazing moment when man landed on the moon. There are those of us who are old enough to remember that. I agree that those who are not old enough and have learnt it all from *The Dish* did not really get the full story, but at least it is better than nothing. I look forward to what would seem to be, on the basis of Ms Lawder's and Mr Gentleman's speeches, a very fulsome celebration next year of this scientific, historical and cultural place that is in our vicinity.

It is important in this context to note that we are celebrating scientific heritage. If I were talking about this 10 years ago, I do not think I would be saying what I am going to say. Today it seems that science and evidence-based public policy in daily life have become less important than they once were. You have only to see the rise of Donald Trump in America, which is probably the number one example of this—talking about “alternative facts” and “fake news”. But it is not just in America. I do not want to single out anyone in particular, but there are still a large number of people who seem to think that if you believe that climate change is not happening, somehow it is not happening. The science on this is very clear. Climate change is happening, and it is very clear that we need to look at science in terms of public policy.

I note that my colleague Shane Rattenbury and activists from the ACT Greens will be attending the march for science on Saturday at 11 am at Regatta Point. Hopefully, there will be people from other political parties there. I know that all MLAs were invited. I have another public event at the same time, unfortunately, that I will be attending. It would be really great if this Assembly showed its contemporary support for science and evidence-based public policy by attending that march and looking at what the science is saying about climate change and so many other things. I refer to the extinction of species, for instance. I could go on at length, but I will not.

I was contemplating speaking at some length about the historical value of the Tidbinbilla and Honeysuckle sites, but given the commentary that has already been made, it would be purely repetitious, so I will not do so. I can remember going out to Tidbinbilla as a young girl. I always think of Tidbinbilla as the tracking station, and the idea that it is the nature reserve seems a bit Johnny-come-lately for Tidbinbilla.

I have also done quite a few walks around the Orroral tracking station, and that is a great place to walk around. It is also somewhere that is far enough from Canberra so that we can still see something of the magic of the night sky that used to be seen in Canberra when I was young.

Another historical site, Mount Stromlo, was located where it was partly because it was close enough to the ANU and to science but far enough away from Canberra so that there would not be light pollution and Mount Stromlo could work. Unfortunately, there is now light pollution at Mount Stromlo. But if you go further out, to Tidbinbilla, Honeysuckle Creek and the Orroral Valley, there is not nearly as much light pollution. In particular, if you go out on Earth Day, when many lights in Canberra do go out, it is a wonderful space to see our heavens above us—which is what, after all, we were exploring with *Apollo 11*.

I hope that over the next year we hear more about Canberra’s role in this important scientific advance and that we all celebrate the fact that Canberra has been part of leading-edge science in Australia. I look forward to hearing a lot more about the commemoration program next year and attending events for it next year.

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) (10.46): I thank Ms Lawder for bringing forward this motion. I will obviously be supporting Mr Gentleman's amendment to it. I thank Ms Lawder not only for giving us the opportunity to note the significant achievement we will mark next year on the 50th anniversary of the *Apollo* mission but also for giving me the opportunity to speak about two of my interests: heritage and industry and innovation.

Minister Gentleman spoke about Honeysuckle Creek, as does Ms Lawder's motion. The humble site and small clearing on a mountain ridge may have only included four functional buildings—the main operations building, the power building, the antenna transmission building, and an antenna pad and a shed—but these buildings connected our community to the universe.

The story of Australia's involvement in space research and exploration is commonly understood by many Australians to be via the famous dish in New South Wales, but, as we know, it was Honeysuckle Creek right here in the ACT that beamed footage of Neil Armstrong taking his first steps on the moon.

The importance of Honeysuckle Creek is recognised through its inclusion on the ACT heritage register, with information at the site and content online educating people on its importance. I was pleased to learn that the National Museum of Australia has included Honeysuckle Creek's role in the moon landing as one of its defining moments in our history.

Unfortunately, all that remains physically of the Honeysuckle Creek tracking station is its foundations. The physical links to the ACT's connection to space research and exploration, however, live on at the Tidbinbilla Deep Space Communication Complex, a joint facility with NASA. Today, Tidbinbilla attracts tourists from near and far. The self-guided museum at Tidbinbilla tells the story of the ACT's involvement in space research and exploration. Indeed, a dish that was previously used at Honeysuckle Creek is at the site.

The fact that buildings at Honeysuckle Creek no longer stand is of course disappointing, but as preparations begin for the 50th anniversary celebrations of *Apollo 11*, we have a blank canvas for us to remember and celebrate the work undertaken at this important historical site in the ACT.

As we look back on our community's place in this significant part of Canberra's and humankind's space history, it is also fitting to look forward to the role we can play in the future. We have the skills, talent and facilities to build a substantial space industry right here in the nation's capital to ensure that Canberra is Australia's space capital.

Canberra is home to many of the nation's space industry leaders. We have led the debate in Australia over a national space industry policy. I believe that Canberra should and can be the heart of Australia's space capabilities. The ACT government has made a clear commitment to work with our higher education institutions and industry to support and foster the development of a space industry in Australia and in our city.

Last year we marked another important milestone in Canberra's space history with the opening of the Australian National Concurrent Design Facility for space missions at UNSW Canberra. The facility is the first of its kind in Australia and will be used by some of the best and brightest engineering and academic minds in the nation. This facility, combined with the Advanced Instrumentation Technology Centre at Mount Stromlo, provides that capability for the design, assembly and testing of spacecraft and components for future space missions. I still find it hard to believe that the fragile-looking box I saw on a tour of UNSW Canberra last year is now in orbit around our planet, doing its very important work. It gives me goosebumps just to think about that.

Australia is undoubtedly on the verge of a significant economic development opportunity in the space industry. Globally, the industry is worth over \$440 billion and is growing at eight per cent a year. While the Australian space industry is estimated to be worth \$3 billion to \$4 billion annually in revenue, it is clear that with the right partnerships, investment and promotion we see the potential for real growth and success in our local market.

I welcome the federal government's announcement of its intention to establish an Australian space industry and encourage it to act quickly to progress this. Inaction risks squandering opportunities for this growth industry. Canberra is undeniably the logical place for Australia's national space agency to be located, and this facility will provide Canberra and Australia with the edge that we need to succeed in this competitive global market. Canberra hosts one of three NASA deep space network stations in the world, and Australia's first laser range facility tracking space debris is also in the ACT.

As I have mentioned, thanks to the recent MOU between the ANU and UNSW Canberra, we have the ability to provide end-to-end design, manufacture, test and mission planning and design and control capability for Australia's next generation of micro and small-scale satellites. Essentially, apart from an actual launch site, the ACT has everything for the national space agency to operate from, with a great mix of skills, expertise, capability and networks. The ACT government has taken a leadership role in establishing a national space agency, recognising that this is an opportunity which harnesses our economic strength as a knowledge capital and to grow the potential we are already realising in this field.

The government has been working together with the South Australian government and has signed an MOU to pursue economic opportunities in the space industry. This five-year agreement reflects both jurisdictions' commitment to support Australia's participation in the international space industry by bringing together our strengths and capabilities. I hope this work continues with the new South Australian government.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Chief Minister on his work in driving this agenda through COAG and his work with other governments to support the development of an Australian space industry. As Ms Lawder's motion makes clear, our city has had a long involvement with some of the biggest events in international space exploration. With the capable space industry sector in our city,

with our world-class research and education institutions, we stand poised to have a long involvement into the future and to play a key role in events that will be looked back on in another 50 and 100 years.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.52): I would like to thank members for their in-principle support, and I especially thank Mr Gentleman for knowing my intentions better than I did myself, apparently.

I understand that there has been a round of heritage grants announced, including a focus on *Apollo 11*. The intention behind bringing forward this motion today was to try to ensure that those who have been most involved in the space tracking industry, for example ex-employees, do not have to apply for grants. We are talking about people in their 80s and 90s. They do not have an organising body. Whilst they have a lot of knowledge, a lot of passion and a lot of good intentions, they do not necessarily have the ability to complete grant applications. My intention here was to suggest that the ACT government should be supporting these activities irrespective of grant applications.

The people that I have spoken to who were ex-employees may have a wish to complete a grant application, but sometimes other activities in their lives—medical appointments, family members going into care and all sorts of things that happen in our lives—take a lot of their time and energy. Whilst they may like to apply for a grant, this might not be feasible for them.

I was just trying to ensure that these people—those who were most involved, are most knowledgeable and are most interested in ensuring that our history and heritage in this area is protected—have an active and valued role to play in determining the activities associated with the anniversary, rather than leaving it to many others, who may have a very valid and passionate interest in the activities but may not be able to draw on the actual life experience of being there at the time at the Honeysuckle Creek tracking station. My intention was to ensure that those who were most involved at the time can also be very involved now in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary, not bystanders to the events that may take place that they may not even be invited to participate in.

I appreciate Mr Gentleman's amendments. We will support the amendments.

I am extremely keen, as are the ex-employees, to ensure that there is some type of public artwork. With the ACT's intention to remain involved in the space tracking industry into the future, this is a way to ensure that our boys and girls can see that this is possible. Even if you live in Canberra, you can be deeply involved in this technological advance. For many decades we have seen boys and girls with an aspiration to become an astronaut or to work in the space industry in some way, and it is entirely feasible that this could take place. Having some type of public artwork or monument in a very accessible area of the ACT would be a way to encourage that.

Some people question occasionally the benefit of being involved in space exploration. What some people might not know is that there are many spin-offs, things that have been developed as part of the space exploration industry that we now get the benefit

of. They have been developed and invented to fit a particular need in the space exploration industry. Things such as smartphone cameras, freeze-dried food, scratch-resistant lenses, CAT scans, LEDs, foil blankets—the ones we call space blankets; they are called that for a reason—home insulation and water purification systems are just some examples.

One that is a bit of a myth is that velcro was invented for the space tracking industry. It was widely used in the space tracking industry, including on the *Apollo* missions, to affix panels to the outside of the modules, but it was actually invented in the 1930s, I think, well before the space tracking industry. I also believe, though it could be a myth, that superglue was invented through the space exploration industry. That is something that is widely used today. There are many things that we benefit from that have been invented throughout that space exploration period from the 1960s through to today, and I look forward to that continuing.

I say thank you again to members. I look forward to hearing more about fantastic commemorative events that recognise the important role that the ACT played in the *Apollo 11* moon landings, and I look forward to many events in and around July 2019 to recognise the role of the ACT and the very important and vital role that many people who are now our senior citizens played in history. I hope that they especially enjoy and participate in these events.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Government—revenue from greyhound racing

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.59): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) in 2014 the ACT Government sold ACTTAB for \$105.5 million;
- (b) the Treasurer inflated the price in return for lower annual contributions from TABcorp to the racing industry;
- (c) TABcorp made it clear that they would have been happy to directly fund the three ACT racing codes;
- (d) the sale price was negotiated in an environment where three racing codes were operating;
- (e) the sale price also included an ongoing contribution of \$1 million indexed to CPI which is funded from turnover on the three racing codes; and
- (f) 22 percent of that turnover comes from the betting on greyhound racing;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the ACT Greens often call on Government to cleanse itself of “unethical” funds and investments;

- (b) in 2015 ACT Greens Minister Shane Rattenbury announced a ban on junk food, alcohol, gambling, fossil fuels and weapons advertising on ACTION buses; and
 - (c) in 2017 the ACT Greens questioned the ethics of the ACT Government for its investment in poker machine manufacturers; and
- (3) condemns the Government for continuing to derive revenue from greyhound racing.

From time to time we can say in this place that a motion is due to popular demand. This is one of those occasions. I have had so many ask me to act, to do something, about the fact that this government continues to profit from a practice that it is banning. It is a stunning hypocrisy from this Labor-Greens government. This is another example.

You can shake your head and snigger if you like, Ms Cheyne, but it is absolute reality. This is another example of the double standards that this government applies in so many areas. They are more than happy to stand here in this place and out in the community and tell members of the greyhound community that their livelihoods, their way of life and their hobbies are something to be ashamed of.

This government suggests that it is shameful that anyone should seek to receive payment from the racing of greyhounds. You have seen them; you have heard them. They look down their noses at greyhound people and condemn them for deriving any income from greyhound racing, but they turn a blind eye to the fact that they are receiving well over \$1 million over the forward estimates from greyhound racing.

These payments to the government are sourced from a fee that was negotiated during the sale of ACTTAB. In 2014 the government announced the sale of ACTTAB. This sale would have had a clear impact on the racing industry however it played out. It was eventually decided the purchaser would be Tabcorp and the sale price would be \$105 million. This price was far above any valuation provided. I think some were talking about \$30 million. The question we have to ask is this: how did we end up with a sale price so far exceeding what was sought?

In March 2014 the Treasurer explained that—I quote his words—“you could get a large capital sum as a one-off and a very small annual contribution to the racing industry”. We saw the Treasurer explain to potential bidders that if they increased the value of their up-front payments the government would seek lower annual contributions directly to the racing industry, the idea being that the government would administer the funding from the sale of ACTTAB to the racing industry over time rather than take a direct payment from the successful bidder. Should we have trusted the government on this one? Clearly the answer is not at all. What we now know is that the government has pocketed that money and has failed to outline how future payments to the racing industry will be administered.

Many of us here are aware of the government’s treatment of the greyhound industry in particular. After being removed from government payments to the racing industry, the greyhound club refused to give up and continued to race and effectively became

self-sufficient. This was not in the government's plan. Their intention was to cut the greyhounds off at the knees, hoping they rolled over and went away quietly. When that did not happen, Labor and the Greens teamed up once again to ban the industry in the ACT. To justify these actions, the government consistently referred to community values—although I do note that once we had a greyhound called Community Values those words were quickly removed from the vocab and the cheat sheet.

“Community values” and “community expectations” were continually referred to. They claimed that this was very clearly an election issue and the people voted for it in 2016. Of course we all know they did not. In 2016 the landscape changed so many times during the election—immediately before and immediately after. Certainly there was no evidence to back up what was said. The greyhound racing industry and participants from the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club were subject to wild accusations of animal cruelty from members in this place saying some horrendous things about Canberra's industry.

I will quote some of them: “When torture is involved there should be no second chances,” “An outdated industry that just promotes animal exploitation,” “We do not believe that this is an industry that can be reformed,” “It is not a pastime,” and “This is proof positive that the industry is unable to operate without these kinds of unacceptable animal welfare outcomes.” This is what those opposite had to say about greyhound racing. My question is this: how could any government possibly say such diabolical things about an industry and then continue to receive money from it?

As part of the sale of ACTTAB the government negotiated an ongoing payment of \$1 million a year, indexed to CPI. In answer to previous questions in this chamber and in committee hearings the minister and others have asserted that this \$1 million a year does not come from betting turnover. I guess the question then is this: please explain where it does come from. Does it come from the sale of freshly cut flowers? Does it come from the provision of dentistry services? Does it come from the on-selling of airline tickets? Of course it does not.

If you are receiving \$1 million-plus a year, every year, from Tabcorp, it is pretty safe to say that it is coming directly from betting turnover. That is what they do at Tabcorp. That is the only thing they do. When you consider that this money was always designed to flow back to the three racing codes—indeed, until recently, I think it was divided up 75, 12.5 and 12.5 between the three—it is very easy to draw a line between betting turnover on the three racing codes and this money. That is where the money comes from. This government has so roundly condemned greyhound racing but is continuing to profit from greyhound racing.

The anti-greyhound crowd continue to crucify me in the public space. They say that I am profiting every time the very successful greyhound Community Values wins a race in Canberra. I should point out that he has won three races. They lampoon me for deriving income from greyhound racing. I am not a member of the syndicate, so I do not have any financial interest. The only people in this place deriving income from Community Values are seated opposite. The only people getting any income from it are in here. They are all making accusations of cruelty but, to quote the Chief Minister, as a government they are “trousering the money”.

The figure of a 22 per cent turnover that I included in this motion is very much a historical figure. It is extremely conservative. Twenty-two per cent is the figure that we were working on a number of years ago. I am sure that the minister knows what the current figures are. I am sure that he is aware that this sport that is, according to him, out of step with community values, is rocketing up the charts in popularity from the perspective of ACT punters. Turnover on greyhound racing in the ACT is going through the roof. I cannot believe some of the figures that I have seen in recent weeks.

Turnover on greyhound racing is going up so quickly that, as a percentage of the three racing codes, greyhound turnover has eclipsed 30 per cent for the last financial year and is set to do so for this one. Despite any rubbish surveys, despite all of the ideological rubbish that you have been spouting, out there in the real world, even here in Canberra, the punters are supporting greyhound racing more than they ever have before. The hypocrisy of both Labor and the Greens on this issue is astounding. If you so wholeheartedly believe that greyhound racing is an evil industry then renegotiate the fee. It is not unusual for members of this place to suggest that the government refuse funds from a source they believe to be unethical. It happens time and again.

In 2015 Mr Rattenbury announced a ban of junk food, alcohol, gambling, fossil fuels and weapons advertising on ACTION buses. Mr Rattenbury justified this decision at the time by saying, "Advertising on government assets needs to be in line with community expectations." The line that you could draw from that advertising back to those fossil fuel, weapons, alcohol and gambling companies is a little more tenuous than the line that you can draw from the Tabcorp money to greyhound racing.

On a number of occasions both of our Greens colleagues have suggested that the government should review its investments in a number of sources that they believe to be unethical. These sources include a wide variety of companies that provide resources and products to the ACT, such as gas and oil companies, poker machines—wow, poker machines; we do not want anything to do with them!—and a number of other things.

We have here a wild double standard. As usual, the Greens are happy to tell the government what they should or should not be doing publicly. But when it comes to being involved in making a decision they sit on their hands and they turn a blind eye. I have gone through some of Mr Ramsay's amendments—talk about turning a blind eye! The amendment should basically say, "Nothing to see here. Look the other way." That could summarise it exactly. How poker machines ended up in the amendment is beyond me.

Members of this place have spent months attempting to justify why this industry should not exist here in Canberra; why Canberrans should be forced out of work; why members of the AWU, which I know you Mr Assistant Speaker are well aware of, should find new employment, a new pastime; why no-one should be receiving payments for the racing of a greyhound in the ACT. Will they now back up those statements and condemn the government for taking funds derived from the racing of greyhounds? Will they now back up those statements and call on the government to renegotiate the fee or, when it gets to the amendments, will we completely ignore all talk of the fee and just talk about the ban and how wonderful we are?

I do not hold high hopes. History tells us that the Greens vote how the Chief Minister tells them too. The Chief Minister does not waste an opportunity to take money from anyone at all. I condemn the government for this utter hypocrisy. I am dismayed but not in the least bit surprised. Thank you.

Visitors

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Before we move on, I would like to acknowledge that we have in the Gallery with us students from St John Paul II College, led by their teacher, Mr Jason Paris.

Government—revenue from greyhound racing

Debate resumed.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.10): The government will not be supporting Mr Parton's motion, and I will shortly be moving the amendment that has been circulated in my name. I do note at this stage that there has been a change in tack in Mr Parton's approach of late in relation to the ACT government's ban on greyhound racing that takes effect in 19 days. The basis of his argument is changing, and it is with good reason. And let me summarise what I would see as the reason for the change that has been occurring.

It is tough for Mr Parton to argue that the greyhound racing industry in Canberra has an impeccable animal welfare record anymore when dogs continue to be euthanised at the Symonston track as a result of this activity. On 28 January Quadzilla was euthanised at the track for an offside tarsal fracture. On 11 February Antique Kerry was euthanised at the track for a number of leg fractures. Since the greyhound racing ban legislation was announced in June 2017 a further two dogs that we are aware of, Hilda's Rose and Kenny's Shadow, have been euthanised at the track for fractures. I wonder aloud whether they loved to race. The routine putting down of otherwise healthy animals which have been injured while providing entertainment for a handful of people is not, to quote Mr Parton and the interests that he lobbies for beyond all reason, a perfect animal welfare record.

It is also tough for Mr Parton to argue that the greyhound racing industry in Canberra is beyond reproach when we know of the extent of doping practices and animal cruelty carried out by greyhound trainers who routinely race in Canberra. I have pointed out before in this place that the four-time and most recent winner of the Canberra Greyhound Racing Cup has been disqualified from racing three times since 2005 over the discovery of prohibited substances in her trainer's greyhounds, including cocaine. This trainer is also one of 178 trainers that has also been charged by Greyhound Racing New South Wales with the alleged unauthorised export of dogs to Macau, where healthy Australian dogs are kept in appalling conditions and used for barbaric entertainment.

Most recently, Paul Wheeler, Australia's biggest owner-breeder of greyhounds, was charged by Greyhound Racing New South Wales last month with multiple offences related to the alleged export of greyhounds to Macau. Paul Wheeler has been racing his dogs in Canberra since the 1980s. And so it can hardly be claimed that greyhound racing in the ACT has an unblemished record when the club allows trainers whose dogs have been found with drugs in their system to race at the Symonston track or does business with people who engage in the reprehensible practice of illegally exporting their dogs for a barbaric death.

Mr Parton cannot even argue anymore that the ACT greyhound industry is separate and somehow different from the New South Wales industry. The very dog that he encouraged a syndicate of people to buy through his cheap media stunt in this place is not even a Canberra dog. He was shipped in from interstate. He is trained by a New South Wales trainer. And he has raced several times at New South Wales tracks. All this continues to support the government's and the ACT broader community's very clear position that greyhound racing is out of step with community values, no matter what name you may give to a little black dog.

I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after "That this Assembly", substitute:

"(1) notes:

- (a) in 2014, the ACT Government sold ACTTAB for \$105.5 million as part of the Commonwealth Government's Asset Recycling Initiative; and
- (b) the ACT supports community racing and the major codes operating in the Territory through both direct budget funding and a share of race field fees;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government has appropriated \$1 million for 2017-18 towards transition support for the greyhound industry, including support for worker retraining and animal rehabilitation and rescue;
- (b) the 2016 Parliamentary Agreement between Labor and the Greens recognises that the ACT has some of the highest rates of poker machines per capita of any state or territory, notes the harm that these machines can cause for vulnerable members of the ACT community, and commits to reducing the number of poker machines in the ACT to 4000 by June 2020; and
- (c) the Attorney-General has recently announced the appointment of an independent expert to provide advice that will support clubs to reduce their reliance on gaming machine revenue;

(3) congratulates the ACT Government for taking strong action to ban greyhound racing in the ACT following:

- (a) the revelations of widespread animal cruelty outlined in the McHugh Report; and
- (b) the inextricable links between the New South Wales industry and the ACT industry identified in the Durkin Report; and

- (4) calls on the Government to continue working to improve the welfare of greyhounds in the ACT through the transition period, including by supporting local animal welfare organisations as necessary.”.

This amendment notes the strong action that this government has taken to ban greyhound racing in the ACT and the \$1 million of funding that we have allocated for transition support for those people affected by the end of the industry. This includes, as I have stated many times in this place, funding for support for worker retraining and animal rehabilitation and rescue. It is little wonder that Mr Parton is now trying every desperate avenue to criticise the government for banning a sport that has no place in this society.

You only have to look online at steward reports to see that dogs are injured in every single race meet. In fact, if you look at the footage of Mr Parton’s syndicate’s dog’s last race meet in Canberra, a dog in the race immediately prior falls horribly. This dog is trained by the same person as the syndicate dog, and I wonder how long before poor Nugget, as he is called, falls, fractures a bone in his leg and no longer has any value to the syndicate that owns him and is also put down. These animals are being treated as disposable objects, and Mr Parton is either in denial about it or deliberately avoiding the truth.

Mr Parton is clutching at his final straws, questioning the sale of ACTTAB four years ago. This sale was through a process that the Auditor-General confirmed met all the objectives set out in the resolution of the Legislative Assembly on 28 November 2013 and achieved an appropriate price. Mr Parton is overlooking the fact that the change to how racing is funded was undertaken in close consultation with the ACT racing industry, replacing the uncertainty of receiving a percentage of ACTTAB revenues with the certainty of direct funding from the budget, and that was welcomed by the industry.

Further, Mr Parton’s understanding of how the Tabcorp licence works is simply wrong. Tabcorp pays a \$1 million licence fee to operate as the exclusive provider in the territory. Their total national revenue from the wagering division in 2017-18 was \$1.8 billion. The licence fee comes from that pool, not from betting in the ACT specifically or on particular codes.

There is simply no quantifiable link between betting on a racing code in a particular location and the licence fee that is paid to the ACT government by Tabcorp. And even if there was a connection between the licence fee and a particular racing code, Tabcorp states that only 15 per cent of gross totalisator revenue comes from greyhound racing in the ACT. Where Mr Parton gets his supposedly conservative 22 per cent—or now, he claims, 30 per cent—is, as with a number of his claims, anyone’s guess.

Given that Mr Parton has so helpfully drawn attention in his speech on his motion to the Labor-Greens government’s position on poker machines, I am happy to restate in my amendment to his motion our commitment to reducing the number of gaming machine authorisations in the territory to 4,000 as a core part of our mission to address the harm caused to our community by problem gambling. The government is

taking decisive action, in partnership with the many different clubs of all sizes, purposes and histories here in the ACT, to help build a clubs sector that is diverse, sustainable and community focused and, at the same time, less reliant on gaming revenue.

Last week, as I stated in this place yesterday, I announced the engagement of Mr Neville Stevens AO to report on options to help clubs reduce their reliance on gaming machine revenue. This independent review follows a year of delivering both stronger gambling harm prevention laws and supporting clubs to move away from gaming machine revenue. During this process, clubs expressed a diversity of views about the best pathways to reduce the number of gaming machines. One thing that became clear was that a one-size-fits-all approach to diversification will not work. We have a diverse clubs sector that offers a wide range of community services, including sport, entertainment and multicultural events. The framework that we will use to make decisions about support for clubs to move away from gaming needs to take account of that diversity.

But let me be clear: the government has set a definite timetable for achieving the reduction in gaming machine authorisations. The club industry diversification support analysis will be completed and a report provided to me by 31 May 2018 and, following that, the government will begin a phased process of reducing machines by 1 April 2019. The full commitment to achieving 4,000 authorisations will be reached by no later than 1 May 2020.

In closing, I return to the imminent ban on greyhound racing in the ACT. The government acknowledges that some people's lives will be affected by this, and the transition task force is there to assist them. I strongly urge anyone who is worried about any impact on their livelihood to contact the task force for assistance. They have until the end of June this year to apply. Funding is also available to animal welfare organisations assisting in the rehoming of racing greyhounds. The ACT government is committed to the ongoing improvement of animal welfare in the ACT and we are committed to reducing the harm caused to people in our community through problem gambling. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.20): I welcome the remarks by the Attorney-General, who has, I think, outlined some of the key factual matters that arise in this discussion. Whilst Mr Parton is far more colourful, perhaps, it is worth actually reflecting on the facts of the matter, and I think the attorney has just done a good job of outlining that.

I am pleased to speak today about the importance of ethical investment and to highlight the leading role the Greens have played in holding the government to the highest standards that we can achieve on this issue. I do that because Mr Parton has obviously researched this quite a bit. I am pleased that he has focused on some of the matters that the Greens have pursued over the years. I think there are some good policy ideas and I would be very happy to see the Liberal Party take some of them on board if they are as fascinated by them as today's motion suggests.

In Mr Parton's motion he rightly lists a number of key ACT Greens issues and highlights how having the Greens in government can lead to substantive and meaningful change. Some examples of this influence include the ban on advertising for junk food, alcohol, gambling, fossil fuels and weapons on ACTION buses, which I introduced during my time as TAMS minister; and our repeated calls and proposals to embed ethical investment practices into our laws, particularly our superannuation funds. This has been led by my colleague Ms Le Couteur, who, as members will know, was involved in setting up the Australian Ethical investment organisation, which has proved to be a very successful superannuation fund here in Australia. And former Greens MLA Meredith Hunter was a very strong advocate on this issue in her time in this place.

There is the commitment, through the 2008 parliamentary agreement, to review government investment practices, which led to the development of the ACT government's responsible investment policy. We have had strong advocacy to improve harm minimisation measures on poker machines, including reduced ATM withdrawal limits for all venues and nation-leading bet limits and a mandatory precommitment scheme for poker machines in the casino. And, as has been referred to in the attorney's amendment, there is our shared commitment to reduce the number of poker machines in the ACT to 4,000 by the end of this Assembly term, which was agreed to in the 2016 parliamentary agreement.

The Greens have long argued that our government should be investing in companies that deliver positive environmental and social outcomes for our community. Current legislation prevents the government from investing in companies that produce tobacco, cluster munitions and landmines. Of course there is always more we can do, and the Greens would like to see a review of the policy to ensure that taxpayer funds continue to be directed towards ethical ends.

Interestingly, Mr Parton's motion seems to inadvertently suggest that greyhound racing itself is an unethical industry. As I have said before, despite the ACT greyhound racing industry's claims of an "unblemished animal welfare record"—and we continue to see that repeated—the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club's own reports provide a record of the many dog deaths and injuries that have occurred here in the ACT. The attorney provided some updated examples this morning. We believe this is proof positive that the industry is unable to operate without these kinds of unacceptable animal welfare outcomes.

Despite the colourful reinterpretation by Mr Parton, you will never hear from me denigration of the individuals involved in the greyhound racing industry in the ACT. Mr Parton talked about some people denigrating him; I have certainly had my fair share of personal denigration. But it is not about that. I do not have a beef with the individuals involved. What I cannot do is stand by in the face of the evidence on the individual dogs, the dogs that have to be put down track side. As I have said, we cannot accept that that is an acceptable by-product of this. Whether you call it an industry, a pastime, a hobby or whatever, we cannot stand by and accept those inevitable injuries and euthanising of animals as a result of this practice.

I am also surprised to see Mr Parton and his Liberal colleagues coming out to condemn the government for deriving revenue from an unethical industry when they have such a strong history themselves of taking donations from what some might describe as unethical sources and voting against proposals for donation reform.

Mr Parton may not recall—it was before his time in this place, although he may have covered it in his previous occupation—that in 2015 ACT Labor and the Canberra Liberals got together to undermine the integrity of our political donation laws. They both voted to remove the \$10,000 cap on political donations and at the same time voted to increase the public funding for ACT elections from \$2 to \$8 per vote. It was a case where both of them were happy to accept the money from any donations but also to take from the public purse and increase the volume of income as well. If we want to talk about standards on these things, let us reflect back on the position that parties took in this place last term.

It was the Canberra Liberals who earlier this year opposed the introduction of a ban on political donations from property developers as part of the elections inquiry, a move the Greens are proud to have secured commitment for through the parliamentary agreement. The Canberra Liberals are not interested in any assessment of whether their own revenue streams are ethical, but now, when there is an opportunity for political point scoring, Mr Parton is all about talking about it in this place.

Despite this apparent hypocrisy, I would like to speak to the substantive issue that Mr Parton has raised regarding the revenue that the government currently derives from its contract with Tabcorp. While the current contract with Tabcorp states that there is no wagering tax payable to the territory on its totaliser licence, there is a tax payable on its sports bookmaking licence. At the time of the deal, Tabcorp estimated that the expected effective tax rate for this licence would be less than one per cent of turnover.

My understanding is that the current arrangement with Tabcorp is subject to the terms of the contract that was signed as part of the ACTTAB sale. The Greens would ideally like to see the government move away from accepting all gaming and betting revenue over time. However, we accept that, due to the existing arrangement, this is something that will need to be considered once the current contract expires.

What I think is worth reflecting on here, though, is that the government actually sold the TAB. I really support that. That was something I tested with our party membership, because it crosses into interesting space around privatisation of government services. My party was extremely clear that we felt it was inappropriate for the government to own a betting agency. Let us go back to some of the fundamental questions here. The government sold a betting agency and it was able to use that money to reinvest in the Canberra community for a range of other things. I think that is a far better place for the government to be operating than running a betting agency. Again, I see that as an advancement in government policy, and one that the Greens fully support.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: It is pretty interesting. Mr Parton dished out all sorts of insults, and we sat here and listened quietly. But we have Mr Coe shouting across the chamber as I try to make my remarks. He will get his chance to speak in a second, and I invite him to make his observations when he stands and gets the Speaker's call.

The Greens do not believe that the government should develop a reliance on revenue from sports betting, including revenue from greyhound racing. However, we were pleased to secure the government's commitment to redirect the \$1 million subsidy previously provided to the greyhound industry, for prize money, to transition support for workers and those impacted by the ending of the greyhound industry here in the ACT, as well as animal welfare organisations, in the 2017-18 budget. If the government is currently subject to an arrangement where it is continuing to receive Tabcorp revenue, it is important to ensure that the money is going to organisations that offset the potential harms of those activities.

In the case of greyhound racing, we would like to see a commitment that any revenue derived from betting on greyhound racing goes to support organisations working to improve animal welfare outcomes in the territory. There are plenty of them. There are the RSPCA, the Greyhound Support Network, and ACT Rescue and Foster. And there is domestic animal services, which is a government agency but could undoubtedly do with an increase in resources. This would be similar to the way that our clubs are required to provide a contribution to the problem gambling assistance fund, which is derived from a percentage of gaming machine revenue. There is plenty of work to be done out there and there are plenty of good places to spend this revenue.

The Greens believe that we should endeavour to make our investments as ethical as possible. Where there is the potential for harm from any investments that we have, we should seek to offset those harms by investing in relevant social and community activities. I believe that, to date, the government has demonstrated a commitment to invest in animal welfare as part of the transition away from greyhound racing in the territory. I am pleased to see that the amendment references a continued commitment to the welfare of greyhounds moving forwards.

Unfortunately, the government amendment removes the recognition that Mr Parton provided to the Greens for the significant work we have done to promote ethical investments, improve animal welfare and reduce gambling harm in the territory. Nonetheless, I take this opportunity to put on the record that we are proud of our achievements on these important issues and the contribution we have made to these policy developments in this city.

Whilst Mr Parton's motion raises some interesting questions about government revenue and the ethical nature of our investments, it does not provide the full picture of what the government is doing in this area. Thanks to key items in the parliamentary agreement, the government has invested \$1 million in the greyhound industry transition, and is developing a clear plan to reduce the number of poker machines in the territory. The government should not be condemned for taking these concrete steps; in fact, we should celebrate these things as important social developments in this jurisdiction.

We would like to see the government commit to the hypothecation of a percentage of funding from Tabcorp to animal welfare organisations, but we accept that these kinds of decisions are made through the budget process. We also support a review of the responsible investment policy to consider whether negative screening should be expanded to include additional industries such as gambling. However, despite these additional calls, we will be supporting the government's amendment, because it highlights our ongoing commitment to both the greyhound racing ban and gambling harm minimisation in the territory. We will be supporting the attorney's amendment today.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.31): I have been inspired to contribute to this debate on the back of the Attorney-General's contribution, as well as that of the crossbench government minister who, of course, has a bet each way. The difference is that with his bets he always wins. He always wins when it comes to the Greens. Whether they are a crossbencher one day and in cabinet the next, supposedly criticising the government but then voting with them on every single occasion, the truth is that they have a very tight coalition opposite. It is interesting that Mr Rattenbury should say he does not have a beef with the individuals involved; they are just acting in an immoral way, according to Mr Rattenbury.

They are in an immoral industry doing immoral things, yet Mr Rattenbury says he does not have a problem with them. That does not stack up. It does not stack up that they can be doing something that he condemns yet he does not hold them accountable. It is totally inconsistent. He may say it is not personal, but you tell that to the hundreds of people who depend on this industry. It is very personal for them. It will be very personal for them in 19 days time when their livelihood is stripped out from underneath them.

Mr Ramsay made a contribution talking about the dogs that get injured and the couple of dogs that have died recently. Just imagine if you did a "replace all" in that speech and took out "greyhounds" and put in "thoroughbreds". The exact same case could be made. How many times do you hear of a horse not running next week because it is injured? How many times do you hear of a horse not running because it needs to be rested? How many times do you hear of a horse not running because it is not at its peak—in effect, it is tired? Is Mr Ramsay going to apply this same standard to thoroughbred racing? People in the thoroughbred industry should be very concerned because the same ethical argument Mr Ramsay makes against greyhounds could be made against thoroughbreds.

We on this side of the chamber strongly disagree with what Mr Ramsay is saying. We think the vast majority of people in the greyhound industry do the right thing. If Mr Ramsay had ever been out to the track he would see that the dogs love running; it is an innate part of their being. They love running. Yes, there is the odd injury and, yes, some have even died, but you could say exactly the same thing of so many other pursuits of humans and animals.

Mr Rattenbury is very interested in the Liberal income stream, but he is not so interested in his coalition partners' income stream. How many times has he done a

speech in this place condemning the Labor Party for their 489 poker machines? How many times has he called on the Labor Party to refuse to accept any money from the Canberra Labour Club? How many times has he come in and said the Tradies should not be making a contribution based on where their money comes from? How many times has Mr Rattenbury come in here and said the Labor Party should not be a developer?

The Labor Party is a developer, and what is more, it gets free kicks along the way. They do not pay a lease variation charge; they do not pay change of use charge; they get free kicks. They did 36 apartments in Braddon and did not pay a cent to vary that lease. And on not one occasion has Mr Rattenbury or Ms Le Couteur come into this place and asked questions about it. They will happily ask questions about anything to do with the Liberal Party but never about their coalition partners, never about the millions of dollars of windfall that the government's mates make through industries that Mr Rattenbury supposedly thinks are immoral.

Mr Rattenbury has double standards here and so does the Attorney-General when he talks about the greyhound industry in isolation. We will happily stand up for those involved in the greyhound industry. We will happily stand up for those in the thoroughbred industry or any other industry in Canberra. There should be fair regulations and rules in place, and when people comply with those rules, when they meet their end of the bargain, they should not be derided by the government that is supposedly there to represent them.

What we in effect have is the Labor Party abandoning their base. The Labor Party are abandoning honest, working-class people with an honest pursuit. That is why the New South Wales Labor Party rallied so hard against the Liberal government when they made this mistake too. But at least the coalition government in New South Wales had the guts to say that they made a mistake, unlike the coalition government here in the ACT. This is a coalition government that doubles down even when it makes mistakes. They are stubborn, and they will happily go against working-class people with a good, honest pursuit. What we have here is, in effect, class warfare.

It is also interesting that no other fellow travellers in the union movement seem to be attacking the government. Yes, one or two unions have said a little bit, but what about all the other unions? Why did all the other unions not come out and say that this is wrong, in the same way that so many of them came out in New South Wales and bagged out the coalition government when they made this mistake?

I commend Mr Parton for taking on this issue. This is an issue that needed a champion, and this issue got a champion in Mr Parton. Mr Parton is standing up for hundreds of people who depend on this for their livelihood, for their way of life and for their family's income as well.

It will be a very sad event on 30 April, in 19 days time. There will be a celebration of all that has happened in the past, but there will also be serious sympathy expressed at the track, knowing that it will be the last one in this term of government. The Canberra Liberals believe this is a pursuit that could come back to life beyond the end of April, and we will be doing everything we can to ensure that greyhound racing comes back to life in the territory after this coalition government.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.40): Not many surprises from this government in this space, and these amendments are not surprising in the least. Where did the poker machines come from again? I still do not really understand how the poker machines ended up in there, but whatever. Why are we inserting poker machines into the motion when it has absolutely nothing to do with the original motion? The placement of poker machines into the amendment basically says that the government has nothing to say in this place.

The minister questioned my figures, and I will repeat them for him so that he can go off and do his research. I can categorically say that, as a percentage of the three betting codes in the ACT, turnover on greyhound racing was 32 per cent in the last financial year. My understanding is that it will be similar in this financial year.

We heard from the minister that two dogs have met with fatal injuries since the ban was announced. Two dogs out of how many? A thousand? Honestly, I would love to know how many dogs in total, of all breeds across the whole of the ACT, have been put down from injuries in that time. When those opposite were trying to justify this absurd ban, they quoted the figures of the number of dogs destroyed over a number of years, and the figures, when you scope them out, turned out to be one in every thousand. I dare you to show me any vigorous outdoor exercise involving dogs—bear in mind that we are talking here about a breed of dog that was bred to run as fast as it possibly can; greyhounds are at their happiest when they are running as fast as they can—or any other animal for that matter, that could not lead potentially to serious injuries for those animals involved.

I would love to see the injury rates in equestrian eventing, thoroughbred racing, harness racing, and many others. And when I say that, I am not suggesting that we should shut those activities down, because the animals involved in it relish in it. The Australian Veterinary Association have indicated that they are of the belief that the greyhound ban in the ACT will have adverse animal welfare outcomes for greyhounds in the ACT. I thought this was about animal welfare. It is not at all, is it? It is not about animal welfare at all; it has got nothing to do with it. The Australian Veterinary Association has declared there will be adverse animal welfare outcomes for greyhounds, and I can understand why.

I do not have any ownership of the people's dog, Community Values, but I classify Nugget as a canine friend of mine. He is a gorgeous dog. Like all the members of the syndicate, I love him to bits. When this dog arrives at the track, he is jumping out of his skin. When his trainer, Lesley, walks him on the track prior to a race, she has to have him on a ridiculously short leash because he just wants to go. He is genuinely excited. His tail is wagging so ridiculously hard that you fear he is going to take off from the back end. The thing that Nugget enjoys more than anything else in the world is running as fast as he possibly can. After his race he is as happy as a soul could be.

Let me tell you, if you could talk fluent dog, if Mr Ramsay for argument's sake could talk fluent dog language and if he could come out to the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club and talk to the great Community Values immediately after he races on Sunday night and say to Nugget, "Hey buddy, that's it. You're not allowed to do this anymore because it's cruel to you, and I'm the one responsible for stopping them from being so

cruel to you,” I do not know what Nugget would say back to Mr Ramsay, but I do not think I would be able to repeat it in here. He just would not understand. He would be absolutely gobsmacked.

Nugget is not disposable; a dozen people from that syndicate are lining up to take ownership of Nugget when he has finished racing. The syndicate members have a right to be offended by the suggestion from the minister that the dog is disposable. If he wants to apologise to them in person, he has three Sunday nights to do it. I genuinely urge anyone from the other side—this is not theatre; this is genuine—to find some courage, make your first visit out to a greyhound race meeting here in Canberra, and meet those former Labor voters. Come out and talk to them, explain to them face to face why you are changing their way of life.

If you are not comfortable in doing that, you have got to ask yourself whether this is the right thing to do. If you cannot face the people and explain to them why you are implementing this policy, the policy is either wrong or you are gutless. It is one of the two. We will not be supporting the amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

Ayes 13

Noes 10

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

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Renewable energy targets

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.50): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) addressing and mitigating global warming is both an environmental imperative and an economic necessity in the 21st Century;
- (b) renewable energy is critical in transitioning Australia to a low-carbon economy in the cheapest and most efficient way;
- (c) energy management, which includes both energy efficiency and demand response is the cheapest form of reliable capacity in the electricity sector;
- (d) Australia is one of 197 parties to have signed, and amongst 175 parties to have ratified, the Paris Agreement;

- (e) the Paris Agreement is a commitment to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius;
 - (f) a January 2018 report released by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency showed that a CSIRO Virtual Power Station Project which trialled smart devices for home energy management could be a viable alternative to costly electricity network upgrades, enable greater deployment of solar PV and reduce the cost of household electricity bills; and
 - (g) that all parties currently represented in the ACT Assembly unequivocally indicated their support for reaching 100 percent renewable electricity for the ACT by 2020, prior to the 2016 election;
- (2) further notes the ACT Government's long-term leadership on renewable energy, in particular by:
- (a) implementing policies to power the ACT with 100 percent renewable electricity by 2020;
 - (b) committing to the 2050 Pathway Platform to reach zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, including by setting interim targets at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in November 2016;
 - (c) its ongoing and unwavering support for and investment in Australia's renewable energy sector through the period of investment and regulatory uncertainty created by the Federal Coalition Government;
 - (d) investing \$5 million of grants to subsidise the cost of installing battery storage systems across the ACT, making it one of the most ambitious battery incentive programs in the country; and
 - (e) leading innovation in renewable energy technology, such as supporting a trial of a 400-home "virtual power plant" in the ACT, which is currently underway;
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) investigate opportunities to create a larger virtual power plant project, including an assessment of the savings for participating households, improvements to electricity grid stability, and strengthening renewable energy investment;
 - (b) increase awareness of the opportunities and benefits that smart devices and virtual power plants offer to participating households and to support the stability of the electricity grid; and
 - (c) continue its active support for measures that mitigate climate change impacts; and
- (4) calls on all parties represented in the 9th ACT Legislative Assembly to recommit to reaching 100 percent renewable electricity for the ACT by 2020.

This motion calls on everyone in this chamber to recommit to reaching 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020. The need for leadership on climate change has never

been more apparent. From 2013 to 2017 the world experienced the hottest five-year period ever recorded. Globally, 2017 was the third hottest year recorded and the hottest year when the temperature was not boosted by an El Nino event.

Australia followed the global lead, with 2017 being the third hottest year on record. An angry summer of 2016-17 broke more than 205 climate records across the nation. Throughout winter 2017 more than 260 heat and low rainfall records fell. Oceans around Australia experienced breaking heatwaves, resulting in high sea surface temperatures. Canberra did not break from the wider trend. In 2017 it experienced its hottest summer on record for daytime temperatures. 2017 was also distinguishable for Australia's greenhouse gas emissions increasing by 1.1 per cent, to 531.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is nothing to be proud of. Increasing heat and the extreme weather events it leads to are having a devastating effect globally, nationally and locally.

The so-called "beast from the east" is an example of how global weather patterns can influence our weather regionally and locally. Earlier this year the UK experienced temperatures about seven degrees Celsius below the historical average at that time of year. At this time of year the UK would usually be experiencing the northern polar jet stream, which produces the prevailing westerly and south-westerly winds drawn from the relatively warm Atlantic.

It is estimated that 48 people throughout Europe died as a result of the freezing conditions. While this was happening, temperatures in the Arctic were 10 to 20 degrees above normal. The North Pole was thawing in midwinter and Canada's northern-most permanently inhabited place, about 800 kilometres from the North Pole, was experiencing temperatures 10 to 12 degrees warmer than normal.

These two events are not isolated from one another. In fact, they are both the result of a sudden stratospheric warming where so much warm air enters the Arctic that the extremely cold air usually entrapped over the North Pole is displaced. What caused the stratospheric Arctic warming to occur? A month earlier, a series of thunderstorms as large and as strong as have ever been recorded created an atmospheric disturbance across the region. The storms caused waves of high and low pressure cells that spread across the atmosphere. These waves interrupted the vortex of winds around the North Pole and caused the sudden stratospheric warming event in early February. In turn, the area of thunderstorms resulted in Cyclone Gita, which caused damage in Tonga and Samoa and even led to stormy weather across the ditch in New Zealand.

These events illustrate the inter-relatedness of the climate across regions and how global weather events can interfere with the delicate balance of local weather patterns. While our understanding of sudden stratospheric warming is only in its infancy, there is research which suggests that these events are becoming more frequent. There is clear evidence to suggest that extreme weather events like storms and cyclones are becoming more common and more severe.

The interconnectedness of the global climate means that we cannot and will not escape the impacts of climate change. Australia cannot hide behind our relative population size, as though this excludes us from action. To argue that Australia's

contribution to global emissions is small ignores our greater contribution per capita and that it will take a series of local responses to tackle a global problem.

Our weather also impacts our livelihoods beyond the immediate effects. Here in Australia, while 2016-17 was a bumper year for agriculture this was very much against the trend. Recent CSIRO modelling suggests that potential wheat yields have reduced by around 27 per cent since 1990, due to climate change. This far exceeds the decline in global wheat yields of around 5.5 per cent between 1980 and 2008. Declines in winter rainfall in southern Australia have had a dramatic impact on wheat, barley and canola crops and there is strong evidence to suggest the significant role climate change has played in this.

The CSIRO have also documented how the heat island effect in the ACT leads to summer land surface temperatures of up to 10 degrees hotter by mid-morning and up to eight degrees hotter than surrounding rural areas at night. Neighbourhoods with tree canopy shade of 30 per cent or more can be up to 13 degrees cooler on a hot summer day. With low income groups having fewer resources available to manage extreme heat and the elderly being particularly vulnerable to suffering from heat-related illness, these groups are most impacted by these effects.

At a national level, rather than debate how we can meaningfully respond to climate change, the federal government would prefer to talk about what to name their “we love coal” social club. While it seems that the only heavy lifting being done by the federal government is to wave around a lump of coal in the parliamentary chamber, the states and territories have been left with the task of driving the policy agenda.

Despite this, the Turnbull government has only sought to criticise states and territories when they have shown leadership in energy policy. For example, in 2016 Malcolm Turnbull criticised the then South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill for suggesting that states and territories introduce their own carbon emissions scheme in the absence of federal leadership. When South Australia announced its energy plan in 2017, Turnbull again criticised it as a problem for other states and territories.

In response, Weatherill gatecrashed a Josh Frydenberg press conference to claim that the Turnbull government had “bagged South Australia at every step of the way”. Now, when the ACT attempts to show leadership in ensuring Australia meets its Paris agreement targets, the federal minister reminds us how small we are. Nonetheless, the ACT will continue to push ahead to achieve the target it has set for itself.

In doing this we must also look at the next generation of renewable technologies and how these can support the grid. Battery storage programs are a good start, as is the ACT’s trial of a small-scale virtual power project. But we must look to see how this can be expanded. A virtual power plant is a network of rooftop solar and battery storage systems that all work together to generate, store and feed electricity back into the grid. Energy generated from a household’s rooftop solar PV that is connected to a virtual power plant will provide electricity to meet the household’s needs, with any excess energy being dispatched to the grid. But this is done in a smart way, in a way that helps support the grid and provide this energy in an optimal way.

By looking to create a larger virtual power plant, we could create our very own big battery. This big battery can be right here in the ACT segment of the national electricity market, or the NEM. By doing this we can generate our own energy and store it locally for when it is needed, in case the NEM fails and we are subject to the pitfalls of the failure of federal government policy. Recall what happened last February during a heatwave. Instead of being reliant entirely upon the NEM, virtual power plants could help bridge these shortfalls, ensuring we had the power we needed when we need it. Not only can such plants help with energy security; they are a win for the consumer. Virtual power plants and the smart energy solutions they deliver to homes to better control their energy needs can also help reduce power costs for homes.

A recent report on RenewEconomy that looked into a study undertaken by the CSIRO for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency suggested that a virtual power plant trial in Brisbane helped reduce household power costs by 60 per cent. According to ActewAGL, participants in the first phase of their South Australian VPP demonstration will see their energy bills reduced by \$500 a year. Of course, having more generation will help put downward pressure on electricity prices for all consumers.

These plants can be a win for energy security, a win for households and a win for all consumers. We have an opportunity to lead the development and the deployment of virtual power plants. I would encourage the government to look into how this can be achieved. In looking at options, I would particularly ask the government to explore how these projects can benefit those in our social and community housing and those in lower income households. These households are particularly vulnerable to the changes that climate change will bring.

As a Labor member in this place and member of the Australian Labor Party, I am proud of the steps that members of our movement have taken to protect the environment. Ours is a party that does not just talk about protecting the environment; we act. We have shown that you can be sustainable and also be economically responsible.

It took a Labor government to create the first state park in Australia, now known as the Kosciuszko National Park. It took a Labor government to protect the Franklin River by enacting the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act. And it was a Labor prime minister that led world efforts to protect and preserve Antarctica as a natural reserve dedicated to peace and science. It was Labor that world heritage-listed the wet tropics of Queensland, the Daintree, and created the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the authority to manage it. It was a Labor government that signed and ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and it took another Labor government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, in 2007.

This tradition of firsts and leadership is one that this Labor government follows proudly. As we grow our city and deliver more services, we are working to build a sustainable and low carbon Canberra. It was under ACT Labor that the territory began charting an ambitious and bold course towards a renewable energy future. To keep the

ACT at the forefront, we must all recommit to our renewable electricity target and take every opportunity we can to achieve it.

Virtual power plants are a great example of how technological innovation can reduce carbon emissions. While we are at it, we should commit to explore further ways we can respond to the task before us. This includes in the areas of living infrastructure, the building code, climate-wise buildings and tree-lined pathways. With the ACT's population expected to reach 500,000 by 2030, the heat island effect illustrates how we face increasing pressure on the delicate balance between our natural and built environments.

It is imperative that we continue to invest in and maintain our living infrastructure to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. If we do not take every opportunity to respond, we will suffer the impacts of a changed climate. We need to look after our environment so that our environment can look after us.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (12.00): I thank Ms Orr for bringing forward this motion today and for very eloquently outlining the case for its support. I want to focus my brief remarks this afternoon on the work that the ACT is undertaking in trialling virtual power plants. Members may or may not be aware that a 400-residence VPP has already commenced in the territory. This is likely the largest virtual power plant currently operating in Australia.

The VPP is created by a network of home solar photovoltaic and battery systems all working together to generate, store and feed energy back into the grid. This is similar to South Australia's big battery that was built with Tesla but, of course, is spread over hundreds, potentially thousands, of homes. Energy generated from the home solar system will provide electricity for the house on which it is installed, saving the resident money.

A Frontier Economics analysis has found that households participating in a virtual power plant could see a 30 per cent reduction in their energy bills. Of course, any excess energy generated by the system can then be dispatched to the grid. This can be centrally controlled to meet the needs of the grid. This means that a five-kilowatt system on 10,000 homes that is centrally controlled would effectively be the equivalent of a 50-megawatt power plant. This is a very exciting project. I am pleased that work is already underway here in the ACT. We look to scale that up in the future.

I want to signal today the territory government's very strong support for Ms Orr's proposal that we investigate ways of going significantly further than we already have and I commit the government to that course of action. I thank Ms Orr for moving this motion today and, as I say, for the very eloquent case she has put for its support by all Assembly members.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (12.03): This is the third time in this term that those on the other side of the chamber have felt the need to reiterate the same issues on the 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020 target and on climate change. Given that the minister for climate change has also decided he needs to use executive members'

business time tomorrow for much of the same, I do wonder whether there is no other business to appear on the notice paper. That is the government's prerogative. However, I note that we did ask the government to cognate the debate so that both motions could be debated together today. That request was rejected.

In the lead-up to the last election, the Canberra Liberals confirmed their agreement to the 100 per cent by 2020 target. In February last year, in a response to a motion brought forward by Minister Rattenbury, the Canberra Liberals agreed and acknowledged that the ACT could meet the 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020 if the predictions and expectations of contracts signed by previous environment Minister Corbell came to fruition. From all information to date, and acknowledging the ACT government's repeated reassurances that we could, we take this at face value.

In October last year, in response to a motion brought on by Mr Steel, we again agreed and stated our agreement to the 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020 target. Now, once again, we have another Labor backbench member asking the Assembly to reaffirm its commitment. I honestly do not know how many times the Labor Party needs to ask for yet another confirmation of it.

However, as we have now been given an opportunity yet again to debate this topic, let me take this opportunity to remind members of what else we confirmed. We also firmly put on the record that the Canberra Liberals will hold the ACT government to account on their commitment to provide an adequate supply of renewable energy for the territory, as well as to look at sufficient storage capacity. We have always said that it is critical that our community have access to reliable, secure energy that is affordable and sustainable.

Whilst this government seems to have no issue with whacking cost upon cost on Canberrans, whether that be through rates, land tax or increasing power costs, the Canberra Liberals will always stand up for the most vulnerable members of our community who are being forced to choose between cooking and heating their homes.

If answers to questions put on notice earlier this year by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Coe, are any indication, cost pressures on a range of utilities will make living in the ACT an expensive exercise for the average family, even before the question of renewable energy is taken into consideration. For example, in 2007-08 the fixed water supply charge was \$85. For this current financial year it is \$104.21, an increase of over 18 per cent. Sewerage over the same period rose 23 per cent, and electricity supply charges over 49 per cent.

The same questions on notice also identify that over the 2016-17 to the 2020-21 financial years the large feed-in tariff cost will total \$240 million and the cost of renewable electricity will be wholly passed on to ACT electricity consumers. We have already seen rises in water and sewerage, and their supply depends on electricity to deliver and maintain. With the cost of electricity set to rise, those costs will also rise, providing a triple whammy to Canberra households. I doubt that that falls within the proviso of affordable.

It is interesting to read the words of Keith De Lacy, a former Queensland state government treasurer and current Queensland President of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Writing in the *Australian* in June 2016, in an article entitled “Solar and wind power simply don’t work”, he said:

The Germans are ruining the day they decided to save the world by converting to solar and wind. Germany has spent \$US100 billion on solar technology and it represents less than one per cent of their electricity supply.

Energy policy has been a disaster. Subsidies are colossal. The energy market is now chaotic. Industry is decamping to other jurisdictions and more than a million homes have had their power cut off.

It is reported electricity prices in Germany, Spain and the UK increased by 78 per cent, 101 per cent and 133 per cent between 2005 and 2014 as they forced additional renewable capacity into their electricity markets.

This comes from a former Queensland state Labor treasurer—a state that would reasonably be expected to support at least solar power.

At paragraph 3(a) of her motion Ms Orr calls on the government to investigate opportunities to expand the current small-scale virtual power plant trial into a larger scale project. If the trials are successful, we can expect household savings of hundreds of dollars, say the researchers. That sounds promising, but surely a trial should at least be completed and evaluated before calling on the government to spend even more money on larger projects? That has all the hallmarks of the approach a Greens minister might take. What Ms Orr appears to be suggesting here is: “Hey, let’s not wait to see if this trial works; let’s just go and do it and hang the expense.”

The Canberra Liberals have agreed to the 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020 target on a number of occasions. We do so again today. You know what else we recommit to? We also recommit to holding the government to account in making sure that reliability and affordability are key factors in moving forward with our renewable energy future. A renewable energy future cannot come at any cost because it will place an unfair burden on those Canberrans who can afford it the least.

I have called on the minister—and I call on him again today—to reassure our community that the ACT government will ensure, as a matter of priority, the affordability of our transition to renewable energy. Canberra families should not be forced to meet the ACT government’s ideological ambition at any cost. Since we are in the space of reaffirming and recommitting, I remind Ms Orr that it is her party that is in government and it is her party’s job to deliver on its promise to deliver on 100 per cent renewable energy by 2020. If she feels the need to keep reminding her own colleagues of that commitment, perhaps she has doubts that it can be done.

Is that why Minister Rattenbury covers the same ground in his motion on the notice paper for tomorrow? He too goes over old ground, reiterating the ACT’s contributions to national and global efforts to address climate change. He too again refers to the 100 per cent target. He refers to the benefits of their policies for ACT residents as a

result of their actions. Given electricity prices are soaring and Canberrans are making decisions on whether they heat their homes, cook a meal or just eat toast and go to bed early with a hot water bottle, I am not sure that it can be classified as a benefit.

He talks of the need to provide long-term policy certainty and support for the development of a reliable and secure electricity supply system. And yet in today's *Canberra Times* he said the federal government must overhaul its power policies or suffer defeat at next week's COAG meeting of energy ministers. He has been quoted previously making similar threats.

In a recent article in the *Australian* newspaper, the minister raised the prospect of the ACT blocking the national energy guarantee because he feels that it is weak. This is ignoring the fact that the Australian Energy Market Commission has called for a consistent national policy relating to energy, as it is the best option for securing reliable energy that meets our climate commitments. Minister Rattenbury has called for "an agreement to move the national energy market forward". That is exactly what the national energy guarantee is offering. As the smallest jurisdiction in the national energy market—we make up 1.5 per cent—the ACT ought to be seeking consensus, not picking fights. Minister Rattenbury's reckless words in the *Australian* do the latter.

The ACT government spruiks its green credentials at every opportunity. The Canberra Liberals have acknowledged the benefits that have come from being early adopters in the renewable space through the reverse auctions, which did—we have acknowledged it before and I do so again today—bring price certainty through the locked-in contracts. We do not dispute this.

In an article in the Australian edition of the *Conversation*, an online journal, in October last year, David Blowers, Energy Fellow at the Grattan Institute, stated that the national energy guarantee will deliver two new obligations on electricity retailers: the first is to ensure we have enough electricity generation available to meet our need, the reliability guarantee; and the second is to drive down the sector's greenhouse gas emissions, the emissions guarantee. Under the emissions guarantee, retailers will be required to buy or generate electricity with a set level of emissions intensity. The allowable level of emissions intensity will be reduced each year to stay in line with Australia's Paris climate target.

David Blowers notes also that the NEG should be reasonably cost-effective. Rather than the government imposing quotas or limits for various types of technology, retailers will be given a free hand to pick the cheapest mix. The reliability guarantee requires retailers to contract or own a certain amount of dispatchable generation—electricity that can be switched on at will—to meet demand in each state or territory. It is regrettable that Ms Orr's motion makes no reference to the NEG. It does not encourage her government's minister to do the right thing by ACT taxpayers and work collaboratively on an outcome that benefits all Australians and ACT residents instead of grandstanding an ideological goal at any cost.

The Canberra Liberals are committed to energy reliability and affordability, and emphasise the importance of national consensus on energy policy. The federal government's national energy guarantee aims for sufficient energy to meet demand,

while we also meet our international renewable energy commitments. The Canberra Liberals are eager to see further detail on the agreement after the COAG meeting.

In the meantime, Minister Rattenbury's threats to oppose the NEG will only harm ACT residents. As the minister points out at every turn, addressing climate change is a global issue and we all have a part to play. An energy policy which has been proposed by the federal government seeks to provide exactly what Minister Rattenbury was after—consensus at a national level. He is now seeking to sabotage this because the smallest player in the national energy market wants to continue to march toward renewables at lightning speed and at any cost.

Why should ACT ratepayers and energy bill payers be made to bear the brunt because the minister has decided he has an ideological objection? Who is he representing here? Himself? The Greens? As a minister in the ACT government, his first obligation should be to the people of the ACT. The Canberra Liberals do not believe the ACT's best interests are being served by the ACT minister threatening to boycott a sensible way forward which will require retailers to guarantee reliability, cost and meeting our renewable energy obligations.

Ms Orr's motion, and to the same extent Minister Rattenbury's motion listed for tomorrow, does little to add anything new to the debate. It does little to provide assurances on affordability. It does little to provide assurances on reliability and it seems to be just more of the same rhetoric.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (12.14): I rise enthusiastically to speak in support of Ms Orr's motion, which supports the expansion of our current virtual power plant trial into a larger scale project. The ACT is the renewable energy capital of Australia because our government has taken responsible steps to manage climate change and our environment by investing in renewable energy and innovation in our city.

Last year, in October, I moved a motion in the Assembly calling on the ACT government to investigate options with ACT energy providers to accommodate battery storage, including making distributed battery power available to the grid—a virtual power plant. A virtual power plant is a network of home solar photovoltaic and battery systems working together to turn energy generated from the sun into electricity, store that power and feed that dispatchable power into the grid when required. It not only provides a source of clean, renewable energy to the market but helps to stabilise the electricity grid. It also benefits battery owners who are paid a premium for their stored power at certain times.

Since I moved the batteries motion last year, which was passed in the Assembly, 400 Canberra households and businesses are now participating in the virtual power plant trial, the largest residential virtual power plant trial in the world. Participating households and businesses are already sharing in the benefits of helping to manage peak electricity demand and improving grid security.

The virtual power plant is also being supported through the ACT government's next generation energy storage program, which provides \$25 million in incentives to households and businesses to install battery systems. The rollout of batteries is one of

the largest in the world and is supporting innovation in renewable energy businesses in the ACT, some of which are directly involved in the virtual power plant trial, including our own electricity distributor Evoenergy and local Canberra tech company Reposit Power.

More people are able to participate in the trial. I would like to use this opportunity to call on all ACT energy consumers, especially those with solar panels, to consider installing a battery system to participate in the trial and further reduce their energy costs, supported by the government's incentives. I realise that the up-front cost of these systems is significant for many households. While the cost of solar and batteries is falling rapidly, it does require an up-front capital investment. While this makes financial sense in the long run, there are many energy consumers who cannot yet afford to participate, and that is why I am so supportive of this motion today.

We should not be afraid of considering good ideas from other jurisdictions, especially when they build on our world-leading approach, and the expansion of our virtual power plant trial is no exception. Prior to the change of government in South Australia, the Labor government under Jay Weatherill announced a plan to roll out a network of at least 50,000 home solar and battery storage systems across South Australia. Under the plan, battery storage would have been installed in 25,000 Housing Trust, or public housing, homes, and in another 25,000 low income homes, funded by private investors.

The scheme proposed a trial of 1,100 Housing Trust properties, installing a five-kilowatt solar panel system and 13.5-kilowatt Tesla Powerwall 2 batteries. This policy not only would have assisted in reaching their environmental targets but also would have provided benefits for consumers. As the Chief Minister mentioned, Frontier Economics projected that the South Australian virtual plant could reduce energy bills of participating public housing tenants by 30 per cent. The energy generated would provide power to the household, and any excess energy generated would be fed back into the grid. The energy can be directed to areas where it is required, or where the network is weak, and service the whole grid. This policy supports households who are in the most vulnerable stage during the transition to the new energy market and builds on the opportunities of government infrastructure for solar investment.

In the ACT the collective roof space of government assets—our schools, our community centres and public housing—is very significant. Many of these assets are already equipped with rooftop solar panels to help reduce their energy costs. Our government is very proud of the fact that almost all of our ACT public schools have a solar system installed on their roof—but even these have a significant amount of room for more PV. Analyses of Canberra rooftops by the University of New South Wales have already discovered enormous untapped potential for solar power installations across a range of buildings in Canberra. Just last week the APVI solar potential tool, SunSPoT, was launched—an online tool for estimating the potential for electricity generation from PV on building roofs in Australian cities, including Canberra.

One of the greatest distributed rooftop spaces that the ACT government owns is Housing ACT properties, and the potential of using this untapped space for greater solar PV and battery storage, as in Jay Weatherill's plan, could not only benefit the grid here in the ACT but provide real savings for low income tenants. This is important because, as a Labor member, I am concerned that, as we transition to renewable energy, it is equitable and inclusive.

The ACT government does have a role in this regard. A recent joint report released by the Climate Institute and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Empowering disadvantaged households to access affordable, clean energy*, revealed that disadvantaged people are the first affected by rising electricity prices. The report states that without significant regulation the future energy market could create a two-tiered system that favours those that can access and afford resources such as solar panels while vulnerable people get left behind. They note:

Whether housing is rented or owned determines the scope of actions available to reduce energy costs, as tenants may have neither the ability nor the incentive to invest in options such as energy efficient appliances or distributive energy like solar and batteries.

Residents in public housing, for example, are tenants, and, combined with limited financial resources, options for renewable and efficient energy sources are limited. The report recommends that federal and state governments work cooperatively to fund ongoing programs for disadvantaged and low income households, as well as to support upgrades to public and community housing stock to best practice energy efficiency standards. We are doing that. Through our existing solar for low income households program, we are offering assistance to households in need by helping them to bring down their energy costs, with estimated savings of \$300 to \$900 a year. But we now have an opportunity, through this motion, to ensure that more of our most vulnerable residents share in the benefits of battery storage as part of an expanded virtual power plant.

The ACT government has taken a nation-leading role in supporting renewable energy, and we must continue this work. The expansion of the small-scale virtual power plant trial into a larger project could take our nation-leading project to a whole new level, enabling our nation-leading companies in Canberra, such as Reposit Power, to prove their model on a greater scale and sell the benefits to the world. At the consumer level, a virtual power plant also has a range of benefits. Not only can solar power be stored, when the sun is shining, for later use but systems like Reposit enable off-peak energy to be stored in batteries when energy is cheap, further reducing use in peak times and passing on savings to the consumer.

Real-time energy monitoring apps can also help consumers to better understand their energy use across the day so that they can make informed decisions to reduce their electricity use at certain times, invest in more energy efficient appliances and employ the use of smart devices and timers to control use. Just over the weekend I installed a few new wi-fi sockets to make sure that my appliances are turned off during the middle of the night and during the day when I am at work, because we know that this can contribute to 10 per cent of energy costs.

Finally, I would also like to encourage ACT residents to shop around and compare different energy providers and plans. We do have competition in our energy retail market here in the ACT. While it can be complicated to compare plans, and they do change from time to time, it is worth doing. For example, at the time of speaking, the difference in the solar feed-in tariff between Origin Energy and ActewAGL is 4c per kilowatt. So it is worth looking at.

I note this is the second time that the environment spokesperson for the Liberals has risen and not addressed the substantial matter in a motion that deals with virtual power plants. She wanted to talk about anything but virtual power plants, and I think that is a real shame. This is a very important policy and it does relate directly to meeting the commonwealth government's proposed national energy guarantee as well. Perhaps she did not want to speak about it because this is occurring at a time when the Liberals are threatening to dismantle the renewable energy programs in South Australia that support the most vulnerable people in their community.

The ACT can show leadership by sharing the benefits of renewable energy investment with vulnerable Canberrans, by expanding our virtual power plant trial, harnessing clean energy from the roofs of households, businesses and government assets, supporting innovation in the local renewable energy sector here and powering our city into the future.

I would like to thank my Labor colleague Suzanne Orr for bringing this motion forward, which continues the ACT government's responsible approach and innovative steps to managing climate change and our environment.

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) (12.25): I will make a few brief comments on Ms Orr's motion. As a Labor environment minister, I follow a long and proud tradition of those that have come before me, both here in the territory and around Australia. It has been under Labor governments that significant action to protect the environment has occurred. One has only to look at the Hawke and Keating Labor governments and consider the Franklin River and Antarctica. And it was the Rudd and Gillard governments that took significant steps towards a low carbon future for this country and enacted the largest marine parks in the world.

At a time when action is needed at all levels of government to combat dangerous global warming, it is the Labor states and territories that are driving efforts to limit greenhouse gas pollution and increase renewable energy generation. Victoria is recognised as a leader in climate adaptation. It is aiming for 40 per cent renewable energy by 2025, and it is the first jurisdiction to enact a target of net zero emissions by 2050. Queensland is fast on its way to being the solar state of Australia, and it is likely to achieve its target of 50 per cent renewable generation by 2050. Of course, the Queensland government is battling hard to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the harm that a warming ocean is causing. Our colleagues in the Northern Territory and Western Australia are also exploring how they can step up action on climate change.

We should not forget the previous South Australian Labor government, led by Mike Rann and Jay Weatherill. Both premiers led action here in Australia and at a global level through their leadership of the Climate Group's states and regions alliance, as well as through leading policies such as the Tesla battery, which happens to be built on the wind farm that the ACT helped to construct.

Ms Orr's motion follows in this proud tradition, and it also follows calls for action that Mr Steel made in this place last year. Their understanding and wish for action are a reflection of the rank-and-file members of our party. Labor members, like all Canberrans, can be proud of the steps that this government has taken. Led by the Chief Minister and my predecessor, Mr Corbell, Canberra has become the renewable energy capital of Australia and the place to come to if you are serious about helping to create a low carbon economy. I am also proud of my contribution in legislating for the feed-in tariff.

Ms Orr's motion offers the government a way to build on these initiatives. Virtual power plants can help to deploy more renewable energy and create generation capacity right here in our territory, with the ability to dispatch it when needed. I also believe that by exploring the ideas put forward in this motion we can help low income householders. These householders are amongst some of those in our community that are most at risk from the changes that global warming is bringing. Virtual power plants have been shown to not only reduce costs for those that are part of the scheme but also put downward pressure on electricity prices for all consumers by helping to create new capacity in the market.

In closing, let me again congratulate both Ms Orr and Mr Steel on their passion and strong advocacy. Like all members on this side, they are committed to seeing a growing Canberra that is more sustainable and one that is not afraid to lead the nation.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Land—Dickson purchase

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister regarding the complicated and discredited land swap deal the government did in Dickson. Chief Minister, have you sought advice, or will you get advice, as to whether the tender and subsequent contract with the Tradies club for the Dickson car park site is legally binding, given all the evidence uncovered by the Auditor-General?

MR BARR: The government will respond to the Auditor-General's report in due course.

MR COE: On what date will the Tradies be vacating the section 72 site that they are currently renting for \$1 per year?

MR BARR: I will seek information in relation to that and get back to the member.

MR PARTON: Will the ACT government allow the CFMEU, Stockade Gym, Creative Safety Initiatives or other occupants to stay in the building beyond their current sublease?

MR BARR: That decision is yet to be determined.

ACTION bus service—pets

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. It relates to pets on ACTION buses, which was a policy, I understand, developed by TAMS some years ago following a government survey showing overwhelming community support. Minister, given the government's stated commitment to allowing people to get around without needing cars, why has the TAMS policy not been implemented so that people can get around with their pets?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am sorry, Madam Speaker. I found it hard to hear the majority of the question. Could you repeat it, please?

MS LE COUTEUR: The shorter question is: pets on buses; when?

MADAM SPEAKER: Under standing orders, it is a brief question. Thank you. I call the minister.

MS FITZHARRIS: Not tomorrow, I am afraid, but thank you for the question. I note that it was one of the many terrific questions asked by a number of school students at the light rail ready forum last week. I would also note that Transport Canberra and City Services is now nearly two years old. I have not heard "TAMS" for a while but was reminded that TCCS is about to celebrate its second birthday.

That is a policy we continue to work on. Obviously, it is one that requires work with Transport Canberra bus drivers in particular. But I note that we have legislation before the Assembly at the moment relating to pets on light rail.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, could you investigate trialling this possibly for the day of the Million Paws Walk because this is obviously a big event for pets and it is one about which I have had a number of comments from people that they really cannot get there because of transport.

MS FITZHARRIS: I will seek advice from the directorate on the question.

Domestic animal services—dogs

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services. On 17 March 2017 police were called to a house in Molesworth Street, Watson to attend a home invasion. Police called DAS officials to attend a dog at the premises that had attacked a person and had lost its ear in a machete attack. Minister, was the dog removed from the premises by DAS officers?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take it on notice. My recollection of that incident is that it was removed but subsequently returned. But I will take the question on notice, and if the answer is different I will provide it to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER: Minister, was the dog treated by a veterinary surgeon for its injuries?

MS FITZHARRIS: I believe it was. Again, I will take the specifics on notice.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, when was the dog returned by DAS officers to the premises?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice as well.

Light rail—stage 1 construction

MR PETTERSSON: My question is also to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister please provide an update on construction of light rail stage 1?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. I am delighted to provide an update on light rail stage 1. Light rail, as we know, is the backbone of a long-term transport vision for our city. Last week saw the project reach several important milestones, including, firstly, the launch of the light rail safety campaign; secondly, the first trees planted on the median strip of Northbourne Avenue—and I was particularly delighted to see the first trees ever planted along the median strip of Flemington Road this morning; and, thirdly, the arrival of the second light rail vehicle in Canberra. The entire fleet of 14 vehicles will be delivered over the next few months.

Last Friday I was very pleased to see the first five-metre tall eucalyptus mannifera planted along the median strip in Northbourne Avenue. More than 1,000 trees and one million plants are to be placed along the route, creating an entrance to our city of which we can all be proud.

Construction works have also rapidly progressed along Hibberson Street in the Gungahlin town centre and, following consultation with local businesses, works in the area have been recently intensified to minimise the ongoing impact of construction on traders, local shoppers and residents. Substantial progress has been made on the Hibberson Street terminus, with the canopy being installed just a few weeks ago and kerb and gutter works progressing well.

I am also pleased to report that 13,900 metres of track slab is now laid, which equates to over 55 per cent of the total route. The installation of steelwork columns and canopies at the Nullarbor Avenue, Manning Clarke Crescent and Mapleton Avenue light rail stops are also now complete. It is an exciting project that is coming ever closer to reality.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what are the upcoming major project milestones?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am pleased to advise that the next project milestones for light rail stage 1 include significant progress continuing on the stringing of overhead wires, with a focus on the northern section of the line to start with. Soon Canberrans will also start to see the vehicles out on the lines undergoing rigorous testing, and energisation of those lines will start soon.

Testing of the vehicles and electronic systems will provide Canberra Metro and the government with confidence that our light rail system will be safe and reliable. The ongoing recruitment and employment of light rail drivers will ensure that we have highly trained drivers ready to assist with the testing of the vehicles, and eventually carrying passengers between Gungahlin and Civic.

The first stop at Nullarbor Avenue is expected to be completely finished, including landscaping, in the third quarter of 2018. There are currently three other stops underway. Work at the Mitchell depot, which will house the light rail vehicles and the network control centre, is also advancing. The administrative and maintenance buildings are at the internal fit-out stage, and the track slab and rail within the stabling yard is now complete. I will look forward to announcing the completion of the depot very shortly.

MS ORR: Minister, what steps are being taken to minimise the impact of construction on the community?

MS FITZHARRIS: Locally, care is being taken to minimise the impacts of construction on local residents through scheduling out of hours works and taking steps to minimise construction and machinery noise. Both Transport Canberra and City Services and Canberra Metro have worked closely with businesses along the corridor to provide ongoing information and advice regarding construction impacts and minimise the impact of the construction.

The ACT government also provides assistance to businesses along the light rail corridor by funding the Canberra Business Chamber for the light rail business link program to mitigate any impact to businesses through ongoing communications, industry collaboration and business support programs. A great example of this work is the consultation with businesses on Hibberson Street that resulted in intensified works on the terminus. With agreement, hours of work were extended and resources were redirected to ensure that Hibberson Street will be progressed as quickly as possible.

I am very conscious that the combination of works occurring in the town centre at the moment is intense. We have most certainly reached peak investment activity in the town centre, from construction of the new bus station and light rail terminus to the regeneration works on Hibberson Street between Gozzard Street and Gungahlin Place. Roadworks in the area are soon to begin on the Ernest Cavenagh extension as well as the installation of a number of traffic lights around the town centre, which will significantly improve pedestrian, cyclist and road flow around the town centre.

We are doing everything we can to keep people informed and get the work finalised quickly and safely. I thank everyone for their continued patience as we move closer to the finalisation of the project and the commencement of light rail services.

Greyhound racing—draft code of practice

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Domestic animal services is currently drafting a code of practice for the keeping and breeding of racing greyhounds in the ACT. When this process was undertaken in Victoria, the government consulted with industry and other stakeholders for five solid months before presenting the code. In contrast, the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club was emailed a copy of the draft code after close of business the Thursday before Easter, with a deadline of the following Friday for feedback. Why was the local industry given just three days, effectively, to respond to such an important document? Is this standard governance practice in your portfolio?

MS FITZHARRIS: No, it is not standard practice. Indeed, it is far from standard practice. I was not aware of that. I will seek further advice. That does not strike me at all as being sufficient time for consultation.

MR PARTON: In seeking that advice I ask the minister to find out if there was specific directive to send this email to the Canberra greyhound club after close of business on the last working day before the four-day Easter break? I think the minister has actually answered my question—three days is certainly not long enough for a detailed response. But I ask for that on notice as well.

MS FITZHARRIS: Absolutely no direction from me, and I will speak with TCCS about that time frame.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, can you explain why the draft code of practice includes, without any supporting evidence, the requirement for race kennels to be a minimum of four metres square instead of the longstanding three metres square?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 24 March you announced that you would be splitting ACT Health into two agencies, one focused on policy and the other on operational issues. Why did you not make a ministerial statement this week about your restructure of a directorate that represents one-quarter of the ACT budget?

MS FITZHARRIS: I did, indeed, answer a question—I believe it was the second question in question time—on this issue and I will be making a ministerial statement in the next sitting. As indicated yesterday, I am happy to provide further information. This is, indeed, a significant moment in ACT Health. It is a very positive one and one that brings us into line with all other jurisdictions around the country.

The decision to split ACT Health into two organisations is one that has been taken in order to allow a clear focus for health services in the territory. One organisation will have a distinct role to deliver health services to our community. The other will have a

clear goal of managing the health system as a whole and supporting health delivery with corporate functions.

Work is already well underway to prepare for the formation of the two organisations later this year. The interim director-general has commenced an important body of work to define the principles that will underpin the establishment of the two organisations, conduct research into options for the relationship between the governance of the two entities, seek professional advice on the options and, most importantly, engage with staff and stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that we arrive at a model that will work on the ground for both staff and ACT Health consumers.

Mr Steel: Point of order, Madam Speaker, which goes to supplementaries as well. Mrs Dunne's question asked Minister Fitzharris to announce executive policy. That is out of order under standing order 117(c). Asking for her to expressly provide a ministerial statement, which is an announcement of policy, I think goes beyond the standing orders. I ask that you rule it out of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, I believe your question was: why was a ministerial statement not provided? I recognise the standing order, and it is inappropriate to seek an announcement of policy in question time. I think that is understood, but I am quite happy to stress the point again. So I would say there is no point of order. Did you have anything to add on that?

Mrs Dunne: I have nothing to add to that, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you have a supplementary?

MRS DUNNE: I do, thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, why did you not mention your plan for a restructure when you made a ministerial statement in this place in February?

MS FITZHARRIS: Because that decision had not been taken. I think Mrs Dunne will find that there is nothing inconsistent about the decision to separate ACT Health into two organisations, having regard to my ministerial statement in February. Indeed the more recent decision will further strengthen my ability to work with ACT Health to deliver those priorities.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, to which ministers will these two new agencies report?

MS FITZHARRIS: To me as Minister for Health and Wellbeing and to Minister Rattenbury as Minister for Mental Health.

Housing—affordability

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. What steps is the ACT government taking to address housing affordability in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The challenges of addressing housing affordability and homelessness are complex. The affordable housing plan in the ACT has been operating since 2007. A good number of outcomes have been achieved around housing affordability. For example, 3,600 dwellings were purchased at affordable prices, 2,025 homes were made available under the land rent scheme, and a further 2,000 dwellings were built under the national rental affordability scheme.

It is timely that a new housing strategy is being developed to pursue new initiatives which will address the whole spectrum of housing, including reducing homelessness, and increasing social housing assistance and affordable rentals as well as home purchases. There have already been a number of consultations last year leading up to the summit in October. I tabled a summary paper last month. Members will know that there are some early initiatives already underway.

Affordable public and community housing targets will apply to new government land releases. They will not be limited to greenfields but be spread across the city. An affordable home purchase database will ensure that affordable home purchase options are targeted to families who need it. Expressions of interest are now open for the \$1 million innovation fund for projects including affordable rental real estate management, home sharing opportunities and design-led co-housing developments. I look forward to releasing the new housing strategy later this year.

MS ORR: How does the ACT compare to other states and territories in terms of housing affordability?

MS BERRY: The government has released more than 37,000 sites for residential development since 2006 with a further 16,250 to be released over the next four years with housing targets for affordable housing. Under the Treasurer and Chief Minister's leadership the ACT has been implementing a nation-leading reform by eliminating stamp duty. Our current housing indicators show that the ACT is experiencing less rental and mortgage stress than the national average. But Canberra's higher than average income has often hit the disadvantaged around the ACT so it is important that we maintain a strong social housing program.

The ACT has the highest proportion of social housing in Australia. As of 30 June 2017 there were 28 social housing homes for every 1,000 people, which is almost double the national average of 16. Unlike some other jurisdictions, this government is investing in public housing with 1,288 public housing properties being renewed over four years. That is around 11 per cent of our public housing portfolio that will be replaced with new and modern homes that will best meet the needs of our tenants.

Ensuring a strong community and public housing program and supporting housing affordability by ensuring that homes and support are provided is important to our most vulnerable Canberrans and to ensuring that they are out of the private rental market.

MS CODY: Minister, what actions taken by the federal government impact housing affordability in the ACT?

MS BERRY: Access to affordable housing options is a national issue. Negotiations are still continuing for a new national housing and homelessness agreement to secure funding to support homelessness programs within the ACT and across the country. Work in other jurisdictions is also underway to progress legal reforms such as reducing or removing conveyancing duties to support people who are buying their first home.

I am disappointed that an increase in funding has not been offered, despite the fact that the federal government has sought to expand the scope of the agreement. I welcome the inclusion of affordable home purchases in the agreement but the commonwealth government provides no additional funding for states and territories to be able to achieve it. I have continually called on the federal government to make changes within their policy control to promote housing affordability.

In the ACT we have committed to finding options and pursuing initiatives at our level of government to tackle these issues and I again call on the federal government to introduce reforms around negative gearing and capital gains tax which will take some heat out of the national housing market.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, yesterday you advised the Assembly on the purpose of splitting ACT Health into two organisations. You said:

The change will streamline governance, management and reporting lines and provide a more effective and efficient governance model.

Minister, what are the most significant changes in the governance model that will contribute to efficiencies?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I outlined in my previous response, the precise implementation of this change is currently underway. Those issues will be worked through over the next six months, in consultation with stakeholders, staff and the community. I have every confidence in the team leading this change.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what is your estimate of the annual financial savings from the more efficient governance model?

MS FITZHARRIS: It is interesting that the Liberals are asking about savings in health. Usually we know what that means, coming from the Liberals. It is usually about cuts in health. We have seen cuts in health from Liberal governments right across this country.

I am confident that the hardworking, skilled staff of ACT Health will continue to deliver the health services our community needs as it grows and as it ages. I look forward to the work over the coming months to design, in consultation, a structure—

Mr Parton: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. Point of order.

Mr Parton: I have a point of order on relevance. The question was very clearly “What is your estimate of the annual financial savings from this model?”

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister has more than a minute on the question. She is on the policy topic of the question.

MS FITZHARRIS: I have finished.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, if you do not know what the changes are or how much the savings will be, how do you know that this splitting of the directorate will be more efficient?

MS FITZHARRIS: Because that is one of the principles, along with many others, that I have requested, to drive this.

ACT Health—former director-general

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. The former Director-General for Health had two years remaining on her contract. Why is the former director-general not responsible for implementing the restructure of the Health Directorate?

MS FITZHARRIS: Through discussions with the former director-general she advised that she would seek new opportunities in her professional career with this decision.

MR WALL: Minister, what level of involvement, if any, did the former Director-General of Health have in developing the restructure?

MS FITZHARRIS: I had discussed it with the former director-general, who had sought and commissioned some work on that.

MRS DUNNE: Was the proposal to restructure ACT Health developed within your office?

MS FITZHARRIS: It certainly involved my office, but not just my office.

Government—heritage grants

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. Minister, can you please inform the Assembly about the 2018-19 ACT heritage grants program.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody and acknowledge her interest in heritage across the ACT. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that applications are now open for the 2018-19 ACT heritage grants program. This round will provide \$345,000 to identify and carry out projects that promote and conserve our local heritage.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: Canberra has inherited rich cultural and natural heritage assets that reflect our history and community values.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: The ACT government recognises the significance of conserving our heritage while also building a vibrant and sustainable city for the future.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Ms Cody: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, can you resume your seat.

Ms Cody: It is very hard to hear Mr Gentleman's response with Mr Hanson interjecting all the time. Surely 117 states—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I think it is just a general point about interjections and distractions in the chamber. Mr Hanson, I ask you to stop. Mr Gentleman, you have the floor again.

MR GENTLEMAN: As I was saying, the heritage grants program is an annual funding program administered by the ACT government to assist the community in working to conserve and promote the heritage of the ACT. Applications for the 2017-18 grant round are now open to individuals, community groups and incorporated non-profit or private organisations, and I strongly encourage those passionate about heritage and with an idea in mind to apply for the funding.

Heritage grants are a community partnership, essential in supporting a wide range of projects that promote our heritage places and objects. It is vital that we work together to recognise, protect, conserve and celebrate unique heritage for the ACT. Grant application packs are available from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate website or can be requested by phone. Applications close on Friday, 11 May this year, with successful grant recipients to be announced in September.

People are often surprised to learn that the ACT is rich in natural and cultural heritage. There is a perception that, as a relatively young city, we cannot have many heritage places or objects. This is far from the case.

MS CODY: Minister, can you provide more detail to the Assembly on the priority areas for the heritage grants program this year?

MR GENTLEMAN: I can, yes. Priority will be given to projects that focus on places or objects listed on or nominated to the heritage register. The priority areas for the 2017-18 grants program are projects that prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. For the 2018-19 program round only, applications are invited that celebrate and promote this important event and the role that the ACT played in the international space program.

Conservation works and projects that enable the continued use of and access to places entered on the ACT heritage register are also a priority. This can include repairs to significant fabric, stabilisation of a building or improvements to public access, safety and visibility. Funding is available for the reinstatement of original features such as exterior render, front facades or windows visible from the street. The amount applied for should be matched by the applicant. Funding is not available for new buildings, additions or routine maintenance such as painting, pest control or electrical works.

Conservation management plans also can be funded for places or objects that do not have an existing plan that is approved by the ACT Heritage Council and is not more than five years old. Conservation management plans guide conservation works and management actions.

There is also the opportunity to look at community projects that increase the utilisation, awareness and engagement in heritage places through education—of all ages—oral histories, tourism, interpretation and events, and Aboriginal projects initiated by or involving the local Aboriginal community in local heritage activities. Also covered are projects that provide partnership opportunities between community organisations and ACT government agencies.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, can you provide some examples of previous projects supported by an ACT government heritage grant and outline how the projects contributed to the promotion and protection of heritage in the territory?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her informative question. I will give some examples from the 2017-18 programs. The National Trust of Australia was awarded a grant for their Urban Polaris project. That was a seven-hour navigating and cycling event where teams of two had to find their way around a series of control points spread throughout Canberra. The National Trust has adapted the concept by incorporating Canberra's rich heritage, both built and natural, and other points of interest as checkpoint sites. The Giralang Primary School P&C were awarded a grant for an event to celebrate the heritage values of the school on its 40th birthday. The Southern ACT Catchment Group were awarded a grant for the protection and restoration of the nominated canoe scar trees in the Lanyon Homestead precinct. The Uniting Church were awarded a grant for the restoration of the Reid Uniting Church roof.

Referring to some examples from the 2016-17 programs, there was the Australian National University's project to re-establish the heritage orchard and landscape at Mount Stromlo Observatory, and the Southern ACT Catchment Group's project to highlight the significance and use of the heritage-listed Theodore Aboriginal grinding groove site. The Molonglo Catchment Group's project was a partnership with the Friends of Black Mountain to further enhance the visitor experience of the woodland walk on Black Mountain reserve. Greening Australia capital region group used a grant to identify, record, register and protect local culturally significant trees in the Canberra region.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. When was the proposal to restructure the Health Directorate first discussed with you?

MR RATTENBURY: I will need to look at my diary and provide that answer to Mrs Kikkert at a later time.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what role did you have in developing this restructure plan?

MR RATTENBURY: I had discussions with the minister for health, as you would anticipate. We discussed the pros and cons of it, the timing and the various implantation questions that need to be resolved in moving through this important policy decision.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, when were you first advised of the decision to part ways with the Director-General of the Health Directorate, and what involvement did you have in this process?

MR RATTENBURY: I discussed that matter with the Minister for Health as per my earlier answer. I would have to consult by diary on that matter as well.

ACT Health—data review

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, is the system-wide review into health data finished and, if not, why not?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, it is.

MS LEE: Minister, why have you not tabled the review

MS FITZHARRIS: I have informed the Assembly on many occasions of the status of the review. The review has only recently been completed. I am considering it at the moment.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, was the data review submitted to you as the minister for health or was it submitted to cabinet?

MS FITZHARRIS: I have received the data review and will be discussing it with my colleagues.

Drugs—pill testing

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General and relates to an article on 31 March, 2018 entitled “ACT government, Groovin the Moo promoter in stalemate over pill testing”. Attorney, the article reports that a letter from the Groovin the Moo promoter states that their support for a pill testing trial was contingent on a list of requirements being met. The article states:

It’s understood some of the demands can’t be met under current ACT laws.

Attorney, what are the demands of the promoters and what are the laws that mean they cannot be met?

MS FITZHARRIS: I might take that question. It is the case that pill testing can take place in the ACT under existing laws. It would be fair to say that Groovin the Moo had requests which no government, under any law in Australia, could agree to and that was to effectively give them immunity from any action undertaken.

MR HANSON: Minister, will the government table all correspondence relating to pill testing at Groovin the Moo between the government, the promoters or other stakeholders?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the question on notice. In relation to my correspondence I would be pleased to table that. I think Mr Hanson asked for correspondence from them. I will need to take further advice on whether I am able to do that.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, will you also table any advice that you have received on any aspects of the pill testing in the Assembly by the end of this week?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly I will take the question on notice and take that under consideration. I am not in the chamber tomorrow so I would be reluctant to agree to that in my absence. But I will take it on notice and look to provide some correspondence by the next sitting.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, in addition to the \$11.7 million spent on the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, taxpayers are now footing the bill for ongoing operational costs to run a centre that you report has hosted only 10 clients since opening in August 2017. We know that ACT taxpayers are shelling out nearly \$8,000 a week for 24/7 security. Minister, what are the other operational costs of running the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm?

MS FITZHARRIS: I do not have those to hand, so I will take the question on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, are there performance criteria or benchmarks that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm must meet in order to continue operating at this level?

MS FITZHARRIS: Could Mr Milligan clarify his question as to what “level” he means?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Milligan, do you want to repeat the question and provide clarity?

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, Madam Speaker. Minister, are there performance criteria or benchmarks that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm must meet in order to continue this level of funding?

MS FITZHARRIS: There are two components: ACT Health direct expenditure on staff and the contracted service providers and partners, which are, as we know, CIT; SMART Recovery; the healthy country program, which is part of parks and conservation; the mindfulness program; and Nutrition Australia. Those would all have standard benchmarks, as do all ACT government contracts.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, are there any benchmarks for the performance of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm? If so, what are they? Will the bush healing farm ever realise its potential and operate as a residential drug and alcohol treatment centre?

MS FITZHARRIS: I think there were three questions within that supplementary. The final one was: will it ever realise its potential? Yes, it will, and I have stated that on many occasions. Certainly, as I said in my previous answer, there are benchmarks and performance criteria in the contracts.

Of course, the overall intent of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is to break the cycle of addiction and also to take a holistic approach to working with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to reconnect them to country, to reconnect them with community and to break that cycle of addiction in particular.

Tourism—economic impact

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the latest tourism data for the ACT?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Steel for the question. Tourism’s contribution is now valued at \$2.3 billion annually. The sector’s contribution to our gross state product grew at 9.5 per cent. One in seven jobs created in the ACT last year was in the tourism sector. That has taken total employment to 16,800. That is 1,100 more than 12 months earlier. I note that tourism and the hospitality sectors are big employers of young people in Canberra.

MR STEEL: Minister, how does the contribution of tourism support the broader territory economy?

MR BARR: Economic diversification is key to our city's long-term prosperity and tourism is an area where we have a significant comparative advantage. The industry is a leading driver of retaining young and talented people in our city. Our city's ongoing success will be built on young Canberrans finding creative new ways to establish enterprises right here in Canberra, many of them involving sharing our city with the world.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, what will the government be focusing on with respect to future tourism growth?

MR BARR: Increasing transport connectivity for our city is the most important thing that we can do to support further tourism growth. Our goal is to make it cheaper and easier to travel directly to Canberra both internationally and domestically.

Recycling—container deposit scheme

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you please provide an update on the rollout of the ACT's container deposit scheme?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cheyne very much for the question. I was very pleased to join with a number of partners earlier this week to announce the commencement of the ACT container deposit scheme. The establishment of the scheme is the delivery of another election commitment; this one, yet again, firmly opposed by the opposition.

I think it is important that the Canberra community understand that the Canberra Liberals voted against this scheme. This scheme will reduce litter in our local parks and waterways, as well as providing more support for social enterprises and community groups. Almost every jurisdiction in the country either has a container deposit scheme or is in the process of establishing a container deposit scheme. The Canberra Liberals' view is that just because everybody else is doing it around the country it therefore must be a bad idea. We disagree.

Under our scheme the Canberra community will be able to return eligible, empty beverage containers to designated collection points and receive a 10c refund for each container. Agreements between the scheme coordinator, Exchange for Change ACT, the network operator, Return-It, and the ACT government were signed on 29 March. The signing of these agreements commenced a 12-week mobilisation phase, ahead of the official scheme commencement on 30 June.

There will be express collection points run by social enterprise groups such as LEAD, the Salvos and National Disability Services, which in turn creates increased revenue streams through the employment and engagement of those most in need of finding work in our community. As I indicated earlier in the week, within the coming weeks collection point agreements will be finalised with social enterprise partners, and the Canberra community will be informed of the collection point locations.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how is the ACT scheme different from the New South Wales scheme?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am pleased to advise the Assembly that while there are many legislative similarities with the New South Wales scheme, which was important not only for regional harmonisation but also future national harmonisation, with almost every jurisdiction in the country either having or soon to have a container deposit scheme, ours will be different. The government has taken into account feedback from the community and will deliver a scheme which best matches the needs of our city.

Building on the lessons learned from New South Wales, the ACT scheme has been designed to communicate effectively and efficiently with beverage suppliers, ultimately rewarding consumers who participate in the scheme, benefiting the environment, and supporting social enterprise and inclusion.

The ACT model includes collection point sites managed by social enterprise organisations. Some of these organisations will also manage bulk return depot sites, similar to the South Australian face-to-face established operating system.

To reduce litter and encourage scheme participation from the start of the ACT scheme, unlike in New South Wales, our collection points will accept crushed containers and any container which carries the refund marking of South Australia and the Northern Territory schemes. This will allow for a greater redemption rate of container acceptability.

MR STEEL: Minister, how will the container deposit scheme help social enterprises and charities?

MS FITZHARRIS: The scheme's collection points will be predominantly run by social enterprises and manually operated, meaning that there will be someone at the collection point to take containers from consumers and to assist with container returns as required. Express collection points will be run by social enterprise groups, which in turn will create increased revenue streams through the employment and engagement of those most in need.

Members of the community will also be able to choose to donate their refunds directly to charity and other community organisations that have signed up to feature as a registered organisation within the scheme. The option to donate refunds to listed organisations will be made available at all collection points.

Over time the scheme will encourage better resource recovery infrastructure, increase local economic activity and provide greater employment opportunities. The ACT container deposit scheme speaks to the Canberra community as a whole and complements a broader waste action plan, which promotes a cleaner environment and future sustainability.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Gaming—consumer privacy

MR RAMSAY: Yesterday I took on notice a supplementary question from Mrs Dunne following a question from Mr Parton regarding compliance checks undertaken by the Gambling and Racing Commission with clubs and whether these checks were also occurring in the casino and TABCorp. In relation to the question, I can advise that the checks undertaken by the Gambling and Racing Commission are authorised under section 23 of the Gambling and Racing Control Act. Section 23 of the act affords authorised officers specific powers of entry and inspection for the administration or enforcement of a gaming law, including the power to examine all documents and, on behalf of the commission, remove or take copies or extracts from any document.

These checks are being undertaken as a result of recent instances where multiple people on the exclusion register were found to have been playing electronic gaming machines inside multiple clubs and in these instances had received a payout of over \$1,500. This is not a new power of the GRC, and they have been able to request information of this type previously. The reports that they have received regarding these excluded patrons have led them to taking this form of action for the first time.

In an effort to assist in mitigating the harm associated with problem gambling, the Gambling and Racing Control Code of Practice Regulation 2002, the code, was amended in 2014 allowing for the introduction of the online ACT gamblers exclusion database to allow for enhanced monitoring of patrons with gambling problems. In the ACT patrons of gambling facilities can self-exclude or be excluded by a licensee, and when a patron has been excluded by either of these options a licensee must not knowingly pay winnings to that excluded patron.

It is also a requirement for a gaming machine licensee to not pay winning amounts of over \$1,500 in cash. The remaining sum must be paid either by EFT or cheque. Payments made by EFT or cheque provide a documentary trail that can be utilised by Access Canberra to ensure that harm minimisation measures outlined by the code are being met and that licensees are complying with their obligations by not providing payouts to those on the exclusion register. Reports can be generated from the exclusion register and be cross-referenced against the information requested from the clubs to identify whether the licensee had paid winnings to an excluded person whilst they were excluded.

Overall, the primary objective of the exercise is to determine levels of compliance within the gaming machine industry in relation to whether excluded persons are receiving payouts from gaming machine winnings. The secondary objective will be to identify any compliance deficiencies and work with industry to determine how procedures relating to the identification of excluded persons both entering venues and receiving payouts could be enhanced in order to ensure that Access Canberra and ACT clubs are working together to ensure compliance with the code.

Yesterday the issue of privacy was raised. Access Canberra officers and those undertaking GRC-specific duties are subject to the confidentiality provisions of the Gambling and Racing Control Act. Section 35 of the act requires that a gaming officer must not make a record of confidential personal information unless in the performance of their duties, and the personal and confidential information obtained under the administration of the gaming law must not be disclosed unless it is a permitted disclosure under the act. The penalties for the unlawful obtainment, disclosure, or non-permitted disclosure include significant financial penalties and/or imprisonment for six months.

Mrs Dunne asked whether these compliance checks will also be undertaken with the casino and TABCorp. The current program is specifically focused on gaming machine licensees. However, as the ACT gambling exclusion scheme also applies to the casino and TABCorp, Access Canberra will in future conduct similar compliance programs that relate specifically to the casino and TABCorp.

Clubs were chosen on the basis that they had the single largest physical presence within the territory and gaming machines present the highest harm to those impacted by problem gambling behaviour. Given that there have been multiple people on the exclusion register in multiple clubs being found to have been given payouts in excess of \$1,500 from EGMs, this action is occurring.

To compare regulatory response, the casino is routinely visited by inspectors on behalf of the GRC around three times a week. It also has mandatory CCTV monitoring of all gaming activity, unlike all registered clubs, and, as such, the GRC believe that the risk of a similar event happening at the casino is much lower than at a club. The compliance checks began in the areas of highest risk.

Children and young people—adoptions

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I rise to respond to issues arising from yesterday's question time. In a supplementary question to Mrs Kikkert's question, Mrs Dunne asked that I report back to the Assembly by the end of this week on issues relating to a permanency information evening held on Monday, 9 April.

As I outlined in question time yesterday, ACT Together hosted the session to speak with carers about permanency and adoption and provided factual information on the process. CYPS attended the forum to provide information and answer carers' questions. Feedback from those who attended the session indicated that they appreciated a greater understanding of processes and felt that the information assisted them in their own cases.

As I said yesterday, I was concerned to see some comments on social media incorrectly suggesting that the Community Services Directorate and ACT Together had indicated that they would no longer be progressing adoptions. I was pleased to be advised that this was not an accurate representation of the meeting. However, I do understand the misinformation created concern among carers.

To address this concern and specifically Mrs Dunne's question, on Tuesday, 10 April, that is, yesterday, ACT Together issued a statement to all carers to clarify the detail of the discussion that occurred at the information session and to emphasise their commitment to pursuing permanency when it is in the best interests of the child to do so. I understand that ACT Together has also responded to questions from the Foster Care Association, providing the same advice. I hope these communications have provided clarity to all those involved.

I note that Mrs Kikkert has also emailed me seeking further detail related to my response in the chamber yesterday. I will provide that further information to Mrs Kikkert as soon as possible.

Answer to question without notice Planning—O'Malley

MR HANSON: On 22 March I asked Mr Gentleman a question regarding the plans to amalgamate blocks 23 and 24 of section 31 O'Malley. The minister said that he did not have information in front of him but said, "As soon as I can get some information I will bring it back to the chamber." That is now three weeks ago, and I am just wondering whether the minister has that information or, if not, when he will be bringing that information back to the chamber, given he said he would bring it back as soon as he had the information.

MR GENTLEMAN: I will take the comment on notice and come back to the chamber with the answer.

Renewable energy targets

Debate resumed.

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) (3.23): I am pleased that Ms Orr has brought this motion forward today. It is a terrific opportunity to talk about some very important issues, both in terms of climate change policy and also in terms of future energy policy for the ACT.

As Ms Orr's motion reflects, the ACT is a world leader in action on climate change, with some of the most ambitious greenhouse gas emission targets in the country, the equal first of any region in the world. To achieve these ambitious emission reduction targets, as members who were here last term will recall, we legislated the 100 per cent renewable electricity target by 2020 and then ran a series of innovative reverse auctions between 2012 and 2016. These have resulted in the ACT not only procuring adequate energy to meet that target, but procuring it at some of the most competitive prices ever seen, in a way that locks in energy prices over 20 years and provides ACT consumers with a cost-effective model for achieving ambitious greenhouse gas reductions and also excellent economic development opportunities for the territory.

This is a great reflection on the ACT. In being an early mover and adopting this approach, we have been able to not only play our part as global citizens in seeking to tackle the issue of emissions reductions, but also position the ACT extremely well in being recognised as a leader in the renewable energy space.

What we now have as a result of some of those investments is that not only are we delivering renewable energy at record low prices, but our innovative reverse auction program leveraged an estimated \$500 million in local investment benefits for Canberra and we were able to attract and sustain the attention of the national renewables industry. A number of the companies involved have now brought their business here to Canberra. All of the ACT's wind farm operators have established their Asia-Pacific headquarters here in the city, and around two gigawatts of renewable energy capacity is managed from Canberra's renewable energy precinct. When you think about the fact that there is around four gigawatts of renewable energy in Australia, you get a sense of the scale of what is being done from this city.

A key local investment outcome of the reverse auction program is the \$25 million next generation energy storage grants program, which is supporting the rollout of around 36 megawatts of smart energy storage to 5,000 Canberra homes and businesses over the next couple of years. For members who do not generally talk about megawatts, megawatt hours and those sorts of things, to put the figure of 36 megawatts in context, the South Australian battery is about 100 megawatts in one installation. It gives you a sense of how large this program is. It is one of the largest residential battery rollout programs on the planet; it positions the ACT as being the leader in this space and also provides an excellent opportunity for industry in this city to get very practically involved in rolling out this rapidly emerging technology and becoming a centre of excellence and a centre of expertise.

We have around 700 systems installed to date through ACT households, the installation rising rapidly in recent months. The program includes around \$5 million of grants to local businesses over three funding rounds to subsidise the cost of installing battery storage systems across the ACT. As I say, that makes it one of the most ambitious schemes in the country. Many of the firms involved are well-known local operators. It is providing them with further opportunities to expand their expertise and business opportunities, in the first instance in Canberra, but ideally it will position them to potentially export that know-how as this technology takes off across the planet.

One of the important features of this program is that each system installed is required to meet specific smart requirements and collect critical data to inform industry research and development. One of the parts of that is that all that data is freely available so this is enabling a range of research institutions and the like to further develop their knowledge in this space.

While the full extent of the potential benefits of incorporating these smart features was not known at the commencement of the scheme, clever policy design has facilitated and led to a promising collaboration between those in the industry in the form of a virtual power plant, which is one of the key points of Ms Orr's motion. She

spoke about it extensively earlier. That trial is currently being run by Reposit Power and Evoenergy, further demonstrating how the program is stimulating innovation in the local renewable energy industry. This is not one that the government set out to achieve at the start, but we have created the ecosystem in which these sorts of opportunities emerge.

That is typical of the sorts of things that happen here in Canberra. The renewable energy hub over on Moore Street, just north of Barry Drive, is designed to exactly achieve these sorts of things: to bring companies, innovators, entrepreneurs, individuals, research institutions and the like together to identify new opportunities because of the work we have already unleashed here in the ACT. This is a great example of that.

The trial is demonstrating the benefit of local company Reposit's software system, which can coordinate the operation of many rooftop solar generators and battery storage systems, providing a combined output of about 1,000 kilowatts of electricity capacity. This is an exciting development for the future of the grid in Australia. More than 400 Canberra households and businesses are taking part in the trial. It has the potential to help manage peak electricity demand, improve grid security, and potentially avoid excessive investment in electricity poles and wires infrastructure.

This goes to the heart of some of the very issues facing our energy systems here in Australia. Peak demand is one of our biggest problems. For all the debate and all the claims that are being made in the energy space, it is actually peak demand that is the most significant issue. That is the point which is both pushing up electricity costs and stressing the grid here in Australia. Grid security is important. Investment in the grid is very expensive. One of the biggest drivers of the increase in household energy bills over the past decade has been the investment in the grid, and the poles and wires, to cope with the needs of the electricity network. These sorts of systems have the potential to really avoid those costs.

It is important to note that while the virtual power plant has been facilitated and enabled by the smart battery requirements of the government's next gen battery storage program, the government does not have an active role in the trial. As a product of clever policy and program design, as I said earlier, the government has created an environment conducive to innovation and the demonstration of new products and services. The product of this approach has seen these two industry participants voluntarily decide to collaborate and offer financial incentives to households to participate.

The ACT government is supportive of the trial, but it is important to be clear that we would be equally supportive of other businesses and energy service providers entering the ACT market to offer new opportunities to local households and businesses. The government needs to both encourage players who are already in the game, particularly our local providers like Reposit, and also remain open to further innovation, to further ideas, and to welcoming people who want to come to Canberra or who want to grow their business within the ACT to have opportunities in this space as well.

Focusing on energy storage for homes and businesses as opposed to large grid-scale batteries provides a number of advantages. It allows the ACT to maximise the comparative advantage it has in the development of small-scale renewable energy technology and it supports the progressive ACT community that is willing to support the installation of battery technology. That is a really important part of this story. These programs are not only driving innovation; they are leveraging significant private investment into this space. That is something that amplifies the work that the government is already doing and also enables members of our community who are very passionate to be early adopters to get involved, put some of their own money into the programs, and help further build the industry here in the ACT.

The Evoenergy-Resposit virtual power plant trial offers financial incentives to participating households, but there are a number of actions the government can take to ensure that far greater benefits are realised for the wider ACT community, including households unable to afford the up-front cost of an energy storage system. By offering schemes such as solar for low income households, where eligible participants are able to access a subsidy of up to 60 per cent of the total cost of a solar system along with a three-year interest-free loan to pay off the difference, and by continuing to actively support cost-effective measures, including through energy efficiency and productivity measures, we can create a fairer and more equitable model that delivers affordable and cleaner energy to all.

Importantly, we must also continue to work alongside industry to increase the use of smart devices and smart grid related activities, including more virtual power plants or bigger virtual power plants. These can be used to manage peak demand on the electricity network, and result in clear benefits to the whole community, not just households with batteries or those participating in a virtual power plant. These benefits, which play out for everybody in this city, include a delayed, deferred or reduced requirement for network upgrades, a potential reduction in the required size of new network infrastructure, and an improvement in the resilience and/or reliability of the electricity network. These are things that benefit everyone in this city.

These things may in turn lead to reduced consumer costs for electricity. Once fully realised, it is anticipated that the approximately 36 megawatts of demand reduction resulting from the next gen storage grant programs could provide in the order of \$60 million to \$220 million in total savings to territory electricity consumers. This will flow through to reduced energy costs for each and every household in this city.

By providing bold leadership and policy certainty on climate change, Canberra has emerged as an internationally recognised centre for renewable energy innovation and investment. We know that industry and governments do not have all the answers. There will be smarter products, services and policies that will help us manage our grid that we have not yet imagined. That is why the ACT government is partnering with the ANU on the new \$8 million grid integration and energy storage research program, which will bring together research on power system engineering, energy controls, energy economics and policy right down to fundamental battery materials chemistry.

We are also working closely with industry and research partners on an \$8 million hydrogen demonstration project right here in the ACT, with a potential focus on grid integration, and a zero emissions vehicle trial. By continuing to provide a supportive and technology-neutral environment for businesses and researchers, we can further develop a renewable ecosystem that attracts and retains the best minds and most innovative businesses in the territory, to help us strengthen our ambitious renewable energy agenda and maintain leadership in this field, with all the benefits that I have reflected on in my remarks today.

In that context, I thank Ms Orr for putting this motion forward. She has touched on a number of really important points, including the necessity for climate action; the development of the ACT's 100 per cent renewable energy policy and the benefits that have flowed from that for the whole community; and the exciting developments in the space of the virtual power plant and all of the technology and innovations we have seen here, both driven by government policy and also flowing from government policy driven by the entrepreneurs, the innovators, the thought leaders and the industry players in this city. It is an exciting time for energy policy in Canberra. I am pleased to support the activities that Ms Orr has called on the government to do. There is no doubt that I, as the responsible minister in this space, and the whole cabinet are committed to continuing to drive forward in this space.

Turning to point (4) of Ms Orr's motion, on behalf of the ACT Greens, let me say that we reaffirm our commitment to reaching the 100 per cent renewable electricity target by 2020. I can assure the Assembly that the ACT government is well on track to achieve that. The contracts have been signed. Many of the generators have already been built. Those that are still to come are well on track. I look forward to the day that the ACT is powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (3.36), in reply: I thank my colleagues for their contributions to the debate. It has been quite good. Unfortunately, we had one speaker who, in what has been a largely positive and encouraging debate, was perhaps not as positive and encouraging as they could be.

I would like to point out that this motion is not simply talking about what we are already doing; it is reaffirming a commitment to that through exploring new ways to achieve it. The minister, speaking just now, very eloquently expressed the ways that we can get really good social savings in the form of cheaper bills as well as good environmental outcomes. I touched on it, and other people did as well.

Given the opportunity to call on this project to show the potential to save consumers, it is disappointing that some people just complained. But I would like to thank my colleagues for doing that. I would also like to thank my colleagues who acknowledged the impacts that climate change has. We had a few speakers who did not even mention that in their speeches. Climate change is a very real occurrence. It definitely has impacts for Canberra, and we need to take action because the window of opportunity for addressing these issues is closing and there will be significant effects for this city.

It was put during the debate that perhaps I doubted this government's ability to realise its commitment. For the record, I would like to clarify that I do not doubt our commitment. But I call on our party and our government to undertake actions to give us every possibility of achieving it. That is what this motion is about.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACTION bus service—school services

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (3.38): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) ACTION buses did not meet the 80 percent punctuality benchmark set in 2016-17;
- (b) the punctuality benchmark was reduced to 75 percent for 2017-18;
- (c) ACTION buses have been on time 72.96 percent of the time in 2017-18 to date; and
- (d) ACTION buses have met punctuality benchmarks in only two of 90 weeks since mid-2016;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) school buses regularly arrive at school gates after the commencement of the school day;
- (b) some school buses are scheduled to depart prior to the end of the school day; and
- (c) some school buses are scheduled to depart up to 45 minutes after the end of the school day; and

(3) calls on the Minister for Transport and City Services to:

(a) explain to the Assembly why:

- (i) ACTION buses consistently fail to meet punctuality benchmarks;
- (ii) it is acceptable for morning school bus services to arrive after the commencement of the school day;
- (iii) it is acceptable for afternoon school bus services to depart before the end of the school day; and
- (iv) is it acceptable for afternoon school buses to depart as late as 45 minutes after the end of the school day; and

(b) report to the Assembly by Thursday, 7 June 2018 on steps taken to:

- (i) improve ACTION buses' punctuality;
- (ii) ensure that school buses arrive at school before the commencement of the school day; and
- (iii) ensure that school buses depart shortly after the end of the school day.

I rise today to speak today about the problems we are encountering with Canberra's public transport. Late buses are having a significant impact on the reliability of the bus network and are letting down the many Canberrans who depend on bus services to get them to and from work, school and other commitments. The government won the last election with a plan to deliver better transport, and the people of Canberra are still waiting for them to deliver.

Transport Canberra tells us that the bus network is as busy as it has ever been and their statistics support this. This is good. We want more Canberrans to be using public transport. However, network punctuality continues to let Canberrans down. Fewer than 73 per cent of buses are on time. That means that almost 30 per cent of buses are not on time. This is not good enough. All too often, buses are arriving late or departing early.

The government has met ACTION's punctuality benchmarks in only two of the 90 weeks since mid-2016. These two weeks were the weeks around Christmas and New Year when far fewer people are using the public transport network. This shows that the government has designed a public transport system that seems to work best when people are not using it.

ACTION's punctuality benchmark was previously set to 80 per cent. However, in the 2016-17 financial year, this target was not met once. Instead of addressing the problem, the government reduced ACTION's punctuality benchmark to 75 per cent. Despite this lower target, this target has now only been met twice.

Minister Fitzharris has blamed late buses on roadworks. She is right; light rail construction has caused enormous disruption and delays to traffic, as have other major road duplications. However, none of these roadworks should have been a surprise to the minister or her directorate. These disruptions were entirely predictable. It is the minister and her directorate who set the schedule of roadworks and control the bus timetables. Why, then, have they not changed the bus timetables to account for the planned roadworks?

Part of the reason buses are often late, is that around 14 per cent of services do not commence at their scheduled start time. Interestingly, almost as many services commence early as those that commence late. This raises a lot of questions as early buses can be just as troublesome to commuters as late buses if commuters unknowingly miss their bus.

Why are buses starting early? Are drivers starting their routes earlier to accommodate for anticipated delays? If drivers can anticipate these delays, why cannot timetables? If drivers are adjusting the times of their routes to make up for shortcomings in the timetable, then surely it is the timetable that need adjusting. Why are buses starting late? How can we have confidence that buses will run to timetable if they do not even start at the correct time?

The success of Canberra's public transport network depends upon on its reliability. Canberrans deserve to know that when they use public transport it will get them

where they want to go when the timetable says it will. I think we can all agree that we want more Canberrans to be using public transport. There are many economic, environmental and health benefits associated with better public transport solutions, not least being a reduction in traffic congestion on our roads. The recent TomTom index report found that traffic congestion costs Canberra almost \$4 million a year in lost time and productivity, with the average driver spending an extra 21 minutes a day on our roads.

The more confidence people have in public transport, the more likely they are to use it. The more people who use public transport, the fewer cars we have clogging up the roads. We want to avoid Canberrans having to crawl through traffic and gridlocked roads in the mornings, and reliable public transport is crucial in achieving this. But many Canberrans who choose not to use our public transport network do so not because they do not want to travel by public transport but because they feel that they cannot trust the system to get them to where they need to go, when they need to be there. Reliability is key to an efficient network.

Canberrans are worried about buses running too late and too early. They are worried that relying on a bus might mean they are late for work, late for a job interview, late for an important meeting, late for university or late for school. Late school buses, in particular, are making life difficult for parents, teachers, and of course, our children.

Transport Canberra has told parents that they do not consider a bus to be late unless it has arrived more than ten minutes after its scheduled arrival time. This is not a view shared by our schools. If a child arrives to school two minutes after the bell, they are still late for school, and they are marked on the roll as being late. This is frustrating for teachers, who want to start their classes with all of their students present. It is frustrating and embarrassing for our children who are being marked as late and exposed to school disciplinary procedures through no fault of their own. It is frustrating for parents, who are being contacted by schools to let them know that their children were late to school yet again.

The government wants to encourage more children to partake in active travel to and from school, but there is very little incentive to catch a bus if you are then disciplined when the bus does not arrive on time. We have an obligation to ensure that our children get to school on time ready to learn. It is not acceptable for our children to be late for school. It is not acceptable for dedicated school bus services to be arriving at schools after the bell has already rung to start the school day. And it is certainly not acceptable for transport administrators to be telling parents that if the bus arrives after the bell is not actually late.

Even worse, some of these dedicated school bus services are not scheduled to coincide with the school day. It is bad enough when school buses arrive late in the morning, but school children, parents, and teachers also have to contend with buses that leave before the end of the school day or too long after it.

Some students have to leave classes early to catch buses that leave before the last bell. This causes significant disruption to afternoon classes, not only for the students who have to leave but also for those students who remain in class after their classmates

have already left. What kind of example is this setting for our children when the government is saying it is okay to arrive at school late or leave school early? How can the government tell children it values their education, if it cannot get them to and from school on time?

Another problem is dedicated school bus services that are scheduled to depart up to 40 minutes after the end of the school day, despite the agreed 30-minute end-of-class threshold. When buses leave too long after the end of school, kids are left to loiter around the school grounds. This means schools face a difficult decision: they must decide either to leave children unsupervised or eat in to their overtime budgets to pay teachers to wait around and supervise them. Nothing about this is efficient. Students would be much better off getting home to spend time with their families, do homework, or engage in extracurricular activities. Standing around at a bus stop supervising students is hardly the best use of a teacher's time, either. And school funding could be put to much greater use achieving educational outcomes.

In addition to bus punctuality, parents are concerned about the overcrowding of school buses. Some of these dedicated school bus services are so jam-packed by the time they have made their last pick-up, that it poses a serious safety threat to students. I have heard from parents that because of overcrowding drivers sometimes refuse to open the back door of the bus at every stop and that because buses are so full, children cannot make their way to the front of the bus to get off in time, particularly the smallest and most vulnerable children. Sometimes this means that children miss their stops. This is of great concern to parents. This creates stressful situations for drivers and students.

Putting drivers and students in an adversarial relationship is not fair on either, and it is a threat to the safety of both. Drivers do not need any distractions when they are transporting our precious cargo. A bus overfilled with stressed and anxious students is a disincentive to catch the bus and is an accident waiting to happen.

Parents and schools have also raised concerns about the lack of direct routes both to and from some schools. Ideally, school buses will take students straight from their homes directly to schools without having to change buses at an interchange. Parents want to put their kids on the bus in the morning and know it will take them directly to school. They want to know their kids can get straight on the bus in the afternoon and come directly home. Most parents do not want their kids hanging around bus interchanges before or after school.

If parents cannot be confident that the school bus will take their children directly to or from school, many will look for other options. If parents hear that their children are being crammed onto packed school buses, missing their stops because they physically cannot get off the bus, they are going to look for a better way. If parents cannot trust the buses to get their children safely to and from school on time, many are going to choose to do the job themselves. Many parents are going to choose to drive their children to school; and it is certainly their right to do so.

Part of the problem is the lack of publicly available data on school bus services. ACTION performance benchmarks do not provide separate data on school buses, and

while it may be okay for a normal bus to arrive within a 10-minute window, the same benchmark is not appropriate for school buses.

If the government is serious about wanting more Canberrans to use public transport, our public transport network needs to be reliable and on time. Most Canberrans want to use public transport, but they will only do so if they can depend on the public transport network to get them where they need to go, when they need to be there. Most Canberrans are not going to mind if their bus trip takes five minutes longer due to roadworks as long as they know how long it is going to take them so they can reliably plan their journey. ACTION's publishing accurate timetables and sticking to them would give Canberrans greater confidence and encourage them to include public transport in their travel plans. It is the responsibility of this government to provide punctual and reliable public transport for all Canberrans.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (3.49): I thank Miss C Burch for what I think is her first motion in the Assembly and am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak about the performance of our bus network. Transport Canberra buses are measured for timeliness, through one of the strictest measures in the country, using GPS technology from the MyWay ticketing system. On-time running for Transport Canberra is currently at 73 per cent for the current financial year. It is interesting to note, though, that if we measured on-time performance with a wider variance, such as in other jurisdictions, the current on-time running would be even higher.

Transport Canberra publishes its performance data on the ACT government open data portal. Publishing this data in an open format allows the public to view, download and analyse the performance of our public transport system. Transport Canberra is indeed a leader in the provision of open data.

Transport Canberra also reports on other performance measures including service reliability, a measure of services that are completed as scheduled. The year-to-date figure for the current financial year is 99.6 per cent. Another is services commencing on time, a measure of services that commence as scheduled or within four minutes of departure. The year-to-date figure for the current financial year is 85.3 per cent.

In addition to the work that has already been done, Transport Canberra are currently assessing route timings to be reflected in the new bus network to coincide with the introduction of light rail. This will ensure timely connections across the whole public transport network, including buses and light rail. Transport Canberra are also investigating introducing new performance measures for the network which are more passenger focused. This may include measuring the performance of planned connections and ensuring that buses arrive at regular intervals and not in a bunch.

I certainly agree with Miss Burch that many Canberrans want to use public transport. And the great news is that, with the government's significant commitment and investment in public transport, more Canberrans are indeed using public transport. Transport Canberra buses have exceeded their 2016-17 financial year patronage target, recording 18.29 million customer boardings against a target of 18.1 million. This

strong patronage growth, with nearly 200,000 more passenger boardings than the target set by the government, reflects significant improvements to our public transport network in recent years, particularly including the introduction of new rapid routes.

Today Miss Burch made a claim in her media release about this motion that the government has forgotten to factor people into its bus network. This might be a cute line but it is clearly debunked by our strong patronage growth and by the government's continued commitment to investing in public transport for our community. The government has expanded our bus network based on what people told us they wanted: more buses, more often. We are delivering on our commitments to provide more rapid bus services for Canberrans and they are voting with their feet.

We are particularly pleased with the strong patronage growth on the green rapid service. Despite being introduced only in October last year, the green rapid is already one of the busiest routes in our city's public transport network. I am pleased to advise that patronage on our bus services continued to grow strongly in this financial year, with Transport Canberra on track to exceed this year's target of 18.4 million passenger boardings.

A level of late and early running across the network is expected due to the buses mostly being part of the mixed traffic environment, which is why variance is provided in the performance measure. Canberra's road traffic congestion is highly variable. For example, mid-week road congestion is worse than Monday or Friday congestion, and road congestion is noticeably reduced during school holidays, as any Canberran who drives to work next Monday morning will be able to attest to.

Transport Canberra runs a fixed weekday timetable every weekday and across both school and non-school periods, which leads to buses running faster or slower on different days. For example, Transport Canberra buses record a higher incidence of late running on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday than on Monday and Friday.

Major projects such as road works also contribute to reducing road congestion and they certainly make it easier for Canberrans to move around our city once they are completed. Examples of this, of course, include the Cotter Road duplication and road works throughout the Gungahlin region. On-time running is expected to increase as construction works around Civic are also completed.

Service planners in Transport Canberra also continue to use performance data from the MyWay and NXTBUS systems to identify problematic running of services and publish revised timetables to deliver an improved service outcome, as operational requirements allow.

Members may not be aware that there is no agreed standard in the public transport sector for the measurement of on-time performance. On-time performance in most jurisdictions is often tied to performance contracts. A Transport Canberra bus is deemed to be on time when it departs a scheduled timing point within one minute earlier and four minutes later than scheduled. This is considerably more stringent than the on-time running performance measures applied in many comparable Australian and international cities. For example, in Brisbane, TransLink measures on-time as up

to two minutes earlier and up to seven minutes later than scheduled arrival time. In Wellington, New Zealand, Metlink measures on-time as up to 10 minutes later than scheduled time.

Transport Canberra also records timeliness more comprehensively across selected timing points along each bus route for the entire network than other public transport authorities, including day, night and weekends. This equates to recording over 6.4 million timing points each year. Timing points are key stops along a bus route that are both important to customers and can be used by planners and drivers to ensure that the timetable can be adhered to. Transport Canberra does not exclude any data due to service disruption, eg on-time running of Transport Canberra buses is not adjusted for any road disruptions or diversions that occur across our city.

In comparison, measurement of on-time running in many other Australian cities is far less rigorous. For example, in Sydney, Transport for NSW measures on-time running only at the beginning, selected mid-point and end of each trip. In Perth, Transperth measures on-time running through a random sample of one per cent of trips in each contract area.

Transport Canberra are currently assessing route timings to be reflected in the new integrated bus network to ensure timely connections across the whole public transport network, including both buses and light rail. Transport Canberra are also investigating introducing new performance measures for the network which are more passenger focused. This may include measuring the performance of planned connections and headway performance, for example, as I mentioned earlier, buses that arrive at regular intervals and not grouped together in a bunch.

As with other bus services, Transport Canberra continually monitors the on-time running performance of dedicated school services. School services are delivered as part of the Transport Canberra network and, as such, they are subject to variability of road conditions whilst in service or from delivering previous services. On-time performance for school services is measured to ensure that the service commences on time and that the arrival time at each school on the route, which can be multiple schools in a number of cases, is within an appropriate time compared to school bell times.

Under longstanding arrangements, Transport Canberra aims to operate school buses where possible to drop off and pick up students between five and 30 minutes before school starting times, and between five and 30 minutes after school finishing times. However, as the same drivers and vehicles are used to provide dedicated school services and regular bus services, this may not always be possible. It is important to acknowledge too that Transport Canberra provides a very extensive school bus service to schools across the ACT and moves school children considerable distances across the city every day.

Historically, some dedicated school services have been long and circuitous, which has resulted in poorer on-time running. As part of the development of a new integrated bus and light rail network, the ACT government is considering how school services work, with the introduction of new rapid and local services and light rail. The

government is also considering how services can be improved for the more than 50 per cent of students who catch a bus to school but already use regular route services rather than special school services. Transport Canberra provides a nation-leading bus service to the community and strives to continually improve across the entire public transport network.

I note and agree with Miss Burch that where there are issues of punctuality they can be followed up immediately. There was a recent example of a school where the school bus was, throughout the first part of the first term of this year, running consistently late in getting kids to school. That was brought to my attention and has been able to be fixed over the course of this term, which I am really pleased with.

I have an amendment to the motion which I understand will be supported. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) there is no agreed standard in the Australian public transport industry for the measurement of on-time performance of bus services;
- (b) Transport Canberra buses are measured for timeliness through one of the strictest measures in the country using GPS technology through the MyWay ticketing system;
- (c) Transport Canberra is a leader in providing open performance data and regularly publishes data on the ACT Government Open Data portal—www.data.act.gov.au;
- (d) Transport Canberra records timeliness across selected timing points along each bus route for the entire network, including day, night and weekends. This equates to recording over 6.4 million timing points each year;
- (e) a Transport Canberra bus service is considered on-time when departing a nominated timing point within one minute early and four minutes later than scheduled;
- (f) based on this strict methodology on-time running is currently at 73% (for the 2017-18 financial year up to 1 April 2018);
- (g) on-time running of Transport Canberra buses is not adjusted for any road disruptions or any diversions that occur in the city;
- (h) 99.6% of Transport Canberra bus services are completed as scheduled; and
- (i) 85.3% of Transport Canberra bus services commence on-time;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) Transport Canberra delivers 246 school special services across the day—95 during the morning peak and 151 in the afternoon peak;
- (b) providing school services that are long, circuitous and share the road with other users can present a challenge in delivering reliable services consistently;

- (c) the majority of school students who catch buses (around 60%) use the general network to travel to and from school, rather than specific school bus services; and
 - (d) school services are also designed to get students to school close to bell times, which is often when there is the most congestion on roads and around schools due to parents dropping students off;
- (3) further notes that:
- (a) the ACT Government undertook the first stage of consultation on a new bus network late last year; and
 - (b) the second stage of community consultation will be undertaken in the coming months and will include how school services are delivered; and
- (4) calls on the Minister for Transport and City Services to report to the Assembly by Thursday, 23 August 2018 on:
- (a) plans for the new bus network and feedback from the second stage of the community consultation;
 - (b) current on-time running, and steps to be taken to improve on-time running in the new network; and
 - (c) current performance of school services in meeting school start and finish times and steps to be taken to improve school service performance in the new network.”.

That again goes to the government’s commitment to provide a frequent and reliable public transport network for all Canberrans.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.58): I thank Miss C Burch and Minister Fitzharris for the debate on this really important issue. Transport in general is actually a core government service. Public transport is part of that. I also very much welcome the Canberra Liberals’ support for public transport which, I have to say, unfortunately has not always been so fulsome in the past, but I very much appreciate that.

I am a regular bus user. I came to work on the bus today. I will go home on it. Thus I do appreciate the importance of punctuality. I will be supporting the government’s amendment. It does include reporting to the Assembly, as Miss Burch wanted, but the timing has been changed to fit in better with the consultation that the government is currently doing on the second stage of the new bus network.

I wish we had had this motion yesterday. I could have not used up one of my questions to the minister, because it has been rather confusing as to what is going on, given that the your say website said that the consultation was going to be early this year and the new timetable would start from the middle of this year. I am also aware of quite a number of community councils that had presentations scheduled by the department for March, and they were all cancelled at very late notice. That is not good. I am glad to see that the government’s amendment will have more reporting than Miss Burch’s original motion.

Looking at school services, I do appreciate Minister Fitzharris’s point that it actually is very difficult to schedule school services given that at the morning peak the

workers are going to work and the schoolkids are going to school: it is everybody moving at the same time. That having been said, of course it is the government's job to fix the problem. It is the opposition's and the crossbench's job to point out the problems. The fact that the problem is there is not a reason to not do anything about it. Of course it is unacceptable that kids are not able to get to school on time. Bus users should not be second-class citizens.

However, I think it is quite reasonable for the government to actually look at what bus services are needed, what schools kids want or need to go to. It is not reasonable for someone who lives on one side of Canberra to say, "There should be a dedicated bus for my child to go from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong," or vice versa. That is almost an hour's trip by car anyway. That is not a reasonable request. I think that the minister's comment that we need to look at school kids using normal route services as well is something that has to be taken into account.

I very much hope that these issues will be taken into consideration in the next iteration of the bus network. It clearly is a very difficult problem in the morning. In the afternoon it is easier, obviously, because more of us stay at work longer than the kids stay at school. But it is clearly one of the major problems.

Miss Burch's motion talks a lot about punctuality, and clearly that is an issue, as most of us have things that we have to go to and we do not want to have to catch the earlier bus just because we do not know if one is going to turn up. Equally, we do not want to have to go to the bus stop a lot earlier because we do not know if it will turn up.

I would actually make a plea, which I have made before, for better reliability of the NXTBUS application. I hope that anyone who is a bus user and is not aware of the NXTBUS application is told about it. There actually should be a lot more advertising of this. The majority of bus users, I would believe, have smart phones, in which case they can see on their phone what is coming next at the bus stop. If they do not have a smart phone, it is available via SMS. It is a bit slower by SMS. Nonetheless, anyone who has a mobile phone with them at the bus stop can find out what is going on. Conversely, when they are thinking about leaving home, they can look on their phone or ring up their local bus stop and find out what buses are on offer. That is great. But what is very frustrating is finding that there are a number of ghost buses. I particularly notice this in the evening if I check from the other side of the road, the Eclipse House bus stop. You are waiting there and then this bus turns up that was not even on the application.

Also I have noticed that there are major bus problems. One afternoon I remember there was about three-quarters of an hour wait for a 300 bus to turn up. That was because there was a major accident on Haydon Drive and nothing was getting through. The bus app said these buses were turning up but they just did not.

That brings me to one of the other points. The more dedicated bus lines we have, the more on-time running we can have. I strongly support putting more and more dedicated bus line routes in. This should be a major part of the solution to all our public transport problems. Certainly it will be a major part of our solution to our punctuality problems.

Also, as we have rapid routes, people actually do not care so much about punctuality. When I get the bus in the morning, I do not bother checking what bus is going to be there because, very regularly, I turn up and the bus is there within a minute of my turning up. I cannot ask for any better than that. I must say that I could not ask for anything better than this morning. The bus I caught picked me up a couple of stops before Woden. It basically did not stop at Woden because there was another 300 there and clearly none of us wanted to get off. Its next stop was the Assembly. I think that it took me a quarter of an hour in the bus from south of Woden to here, and that is very good—very good running.

One other item I would like to just briefly mention is Sunday timetables. With Sunday timetables, the problem is not so much that the buses are not on time. The buses are on time on Sunday, because there is not an awful lot of other traffic around. The problem on Sunday is the very few buses, and they cease running in the early evening. This was particularly highlighted at Easter with the Folk Festival. Quite a number of Canberra patrons wished to go to the Folk Festival on the bus. That was okay on the Thursday night, because Thursday was a normal work day, but the rest of the days of Easter we had the Sunday bus timetable and, basically, it meant that you had to leave by 6 o'clock, which was very frustrating if you were at the Folk Festival or for many other reasons.

I think in getting our bus timetables together we must be aware that buses are not used just by school children to go to school and by office workers to go in at 9 o'clock and back at 5 o'clock. There are a lot of other people who use our buses, people who are too young drive, people who are too old to drive, people who have a disability of some sort which means they cannot drive, people who are concerned about greenhouse gas emissions, as we talked about in the earlier debate, and do not want to drive a private car and of course a substantial number of Canberrans who simply cannot afford to maintain a private car. And that is basically most people on Centrelink allowances. It is just not possible to afford to run a car as well as pay for everything that you have to pay for.

There are a lot of people in Canberra who use the buses, which is really great, and I am very pleased that we have had this debate and am pleased to support the concepts behind Miss Burch's motion but obviously we will be supporting the amendment to that.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (4.08): I thank Miss Burch for bringing this motion to the Assembly. Public transport is vitally important for everyone in any city, but for parents who rely on a dedicated school bus to take their children to school and back home, it is even more imperative that we get this right. I have had many parents, students and teachers reach out to me about the poor coordination of buses for schools, thus leading to extensive travel times, excessive waiting times for services, disruptively arriving at schools late or forcing students to leave before classes are finished.

Worst of all, the woeful lack of information about school bus services, about their performance and about what parents, students and teachers can do about this makes

the situation quite bleak. Surely the whole purpose—in fact, the sole purpose—of a morning school bus is to collect students from their local bus stop and get them safely to their school on time. It is concerning that this sole purpose of a morning school bus is so regularly unfulfilled. School bus services are often so convoluted they lead to students getting to school after the first bell.

I am sure that all members in this chamber read with some concern the article on RiotACT last month about the persistent lateness of the 501 service to Mount Stromlo High School. The 501 service to Mount Stromlo high is scheduled to arrive at the school gates at 8.43 in the morning. The first bell of the day at that school is 8.45. Even if the bus does arrive at the scheduled time, it gives students two minutes—two minutes, Madam Assistant Speaker—to get off the bus, walk into the school and into their classrooms in time for rollcall.

With crowds of students piling off the bus and the usual morning hustle and bustle, this is a big ask for even the most disciplined of students—and this, of course, is a best case scenario. Given ACTION's policy that arriving within 10 minutes of the scheduled arrival time is not considered late, if the school bus arrives after the school bell on a regular basis, so long as it arrives by 8.53—eight minutes after the first bell—it is considered on time. This, of course, does not even address the buses that are actually late, that arrive after 8.53.

As Miss Burch referred to earlier, we know that punctuality is not this government's strong suit when it comes to bus times. The government may well argue that school buses are different, but the biggest problem is that we just do not know because of the sheer lack of information available to teachers, to parents, to students or to the Canberra public about school bus times and performance.

Being late to class has a number of implications. First, it is disruptive and discourteous to the teacher and to other students who have made the effort to be in class on time. I am sure you will also agree, Madam Assistant Speaker, that we have all been in situations where we have been made to wait for someone who is running late. It is super-annoying.

Second, it causes students who are arriving late to be flustered and to be in a rush, hardly the right frame of mind that we would want for our students who are starting a full day of learning. Third, it is about showing our students that their education matters. If the ACT government shows how it places such little importance on getting our students to school on time, what is that saying to our children about the way this ACT government values their education and their future? For a government that is supposedly so focused on education and public transport, it is simply unacceptable that we have regular school bus services that are not meeting their sole goal of getting our students safely to school on time.

It is not just the beginning of the school day that causes problems. In speaking to several teachers and parents in recent times, I have had accounts that some teachers were letting their classes out early at the end of the day to make sure their students are able to catch their school bus home because the bus arrives and leaves the school with, or without, students on board before the final bell. The only positive in this situation, I

am informed, is that when schools have raised their concerns with ACTION, officials and drivers at ACTION have been more than understanding and have tried to find a solution. However, whichever way you look at it, it is not good enough.

Late last year it became clear that the planned change to the ACTION network would lead to a 15-minute delay of the 4.55 afternoon bus service from Alfred Deakin high to Woden. This delay would mean that the bus arrived 29 minutes after the end of the school day, stretching school resources even further as teachers are paid to supervise only until 3.30. I was approached by a parent who lives in Coombs and who has a daughter who attends Alfred Deakin high, an eight-kilometre journey door to door.

As there is no direct bus from Coombs to the school, she must take two buses. Due to the poor coordination, the first bus the student can take from Alfred Deakin in the afternoon is jam-packed with students who do not wish to wait for the significantly later second bus. This daily rush and crushing overcrowding of the bus has led to students becoming anxious about their commute to and from school and has encouraged at least one student to take public buses. This whole process has lengthened the eight-kilometre journey home to an approximately 90-minute commute.

Whilst I understand that the purview of managing school buses falls within the responsibility of the Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services, I implore the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development to think about the impact this is having on our children's education. She has stated many times in this chamber that she is passionate about making sure our children have access to the best education. There are many ways to do this and fixing up a poor service that is getting our students to school on time is just one. I implore her to take the concerns of these parents, teachers and students seriously.

I finish with some of the words of those who reached out to me to advocate on their behalf directly to both the Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. On behalf of Bronwyn, why is it that the No 619 service is usually 20 minutes late each day getting to Dickson College? On behalf of Michael, why is it that the bus from Gungahlin to Merici is 10 to 15 minutes late each day? On behalf of Michelle, why is the bus stop on Clarrie Hermes Street next to St John Paul II College not active? Why does no school bus go from the Belconnen area to St John Paul II College, forcing more than 20 students to ride a public bus, the No 51, to get to and from Belconnen and school? On behalf of Kelly, why is the Dunlop-Macgregor bus always 10 minutes late for class?

On behalf of the parents of a Daramalan student, I ask: why does the 405 bus arrive 20 minutes after the school bell? On behalf of Chris, why is the only option for students in Molonglo to arrive at St Jude's on a non-school bus at 8.05, which is against school policy as the children will be unsupervised until 8.30? Why does the only bus to get them home leave at 3 pm, which is before school finishes at the standard time of 3.05, or they have to wait unsupervised until 4 pm, which is not great for safety? One parent reached out to me saying that on several occasions the bus to take her children to school has arrived at her stop before the schedule time. The correct time, or another time, has not been updated on the phone app. On behalf of

that parent, I ask: why is it that the bus misses them rather than them missing the bus?

To both the Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development I say that parents, teachers, students and the broader Canberra community await your response.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (4.16): I thank all members today for their contributions to debate on this motion. I would like to reiterate my commitment to fighting for reliable, accessible and convenient public transport for all Canberrans. Canberrans deserve to know that when they use public transport it will get them where they want to go when the timetable said it would. The more confidence people have in the public transport network, the more likely they are to use it. When we look at Transport Canberra's own performance data, we see that Canberra's public transport network is not reliable and it is not punctual.

Buses are currently failing to meet punctuality targets almost 30 per cent of the time. The current timetable is not working for Canberrans. Despite what the minister has said about more Canberrans using public transport, performance data shows that the network is only running on time when people are not using it. The government, it seems, has forgotten to factor people into this current network.

Right now many Canberrans want to use public transport. Those on all sides of this chamber agree that we want more Canberrans to use public transport. It provides many economic, environmental and health benefits that we would like to see Canberrans enjoy. The many Canberrans who choose not to use this network do so not because they do not want to but because they feel like they cannot trust the timetable.

They are not willing to take the risk that the bus might have left too early or arrives too late to get them to where they need to be. This inconveniences commuters and students alike. It is unacceptable that dedicated school buses are getting children to school after the morning bell. It is even more unacceptable that Transport Canberra has told parents that it does not see this to be a problem.

It cannot be acceptable that dedicated school buses make students late for school. I can see no good reason for afternoon school buses to be departing before the end of the school day. This practice should be stopped. When buses depart up to 40 minutes after the end of the day, schools are paying teachers overtime to supervise students who are waiting for buses. This cuts into school budgets for no educational purpose.

If the government is serious about its commitment to our children's education, it must commit to a plan of action to ensure that school buses get our children to school on time. I am pleased to note that the government plans to seek and act on community feedback when it is designing the new transport network. I look forward to hearing from the government about the concrete steps it will take to ensure that public transport is reliable and punctual for all Canberrans.

I particularly look forward to the government providing comprehensive and ongoing data on the performance of school bus services and taking steps to improve the performance of these services to ensure that they meet school start and finish times. I

thank Minister Fitzharris for making the commitment to ensuring that this is carried out.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Public housing—supply

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.20): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the Public Housing Renewal Program has successfully rehoused public housing tenants in high quality and accessible housing;
- (b) approximately 38 percent of the public housing portfolio is more than 40 years old, as such, the need for further investment in housing renewal will continue;
- (c) there are currently 1730 households waiting to access public housing. The average waiting time for applicants ranges from 274 days for those deemed eligible for priority housing and 983 days for standard applicants;
- (d) since 2010-11 there has been a reduction of 387 public housing units in the ACT, dropping from 12 209 to 11 822 in that period;
- (e) in 1991 public housing made up 12.4 percent of the ACT's housing stock. By 2001 this had dropped to 10.2 percent. Public housing currently makes up 7.1 percent of the ACT's housing stock;
- (f) the Suburban Land Agency has identified 143 dwelling sites for public housing in 2017-18. During this period 4120 dwelling sites have been scheduled for release by the ACT Government, meaning that only 3.5 percent of this new housing stock will be public housing;
- (g) public housing in the ACT is highly targeted, with 99 percent of allocations made to people in greatest need, against a national average of 74 percent. This results in a high level of rental rebate (\$142 million in 2016-17) and lower ability to cross-subsidise Housing ACT's operations from own source revenue; and
- (h) the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), currently being negotiated between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, will include a multilateral agreement as well as bilateral agreements, known as supplementary agreements. The legislation for the NHHA, currently before the Federal Parliament, notes that supplementary agreements require State and Territory governments to develop a housing strategy that "indicates the level of housing supply needed to respond to projected housing demand, and outlines the reforms and initiatives that contribute to meeting this need"; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) commit to growing social housing stock to at least maintain a minimum of 7.1 percent of the ACT's housing stock as social housing, ie housing that

- is public housing or managed by a not-for-profit organisation and where rent is set at a maximum of 25 percent of tenants' income;
- (b) implement policies to further grow the supply of affordable rental housing where rent is set at a discount to market, and properties are targeted to low and moderate income households; and
 - (c) provide the Assembly with a report about the ACT's participation in the NHHA during the first sitting period after it is signed, including information about:
 - (i) the methodology used for calculating the level of housing supply needed to respond to projected housing demand as part of the Territory's bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth for the NHHA;
 - (ii) which minister(s) and directorate(s) will be responsible for conducting this work; and
 - (iii) initiatives that will contribute to meeting housing supply, as part of the Territory's bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth for the NHHA.

This is one of my favourite subjects, but one of the least favourite subjects is the fact that the rental market in Canberra is grim for low income people. Canberra clearly has an affordable housing problem. The most recent Anglicare rental affordability snapshot found that in April 2017 there were 1,280 private rentals advertised in the ACT and Queanbeyan. But using the normal definition of "affordable rental" being one that costs less than 30 per cent of your income, only 29 of those were affordable for a couple with both adults working and receiving the minimum wage plus family tax benefit A as well as commonwealth rent assistance. Only one rental property was affordable where one parent works and earns the minimum wage.

For single people earning the minimum wage Anglicare found there were a whole 51 rental properties, or four per cent of the total, that would be affordable. However, the vast majority of these were in shared accommodation arrangements, and the few non-shared accommodation options that did exist were located in Queanbeyan, which would mean that most people would have to add on the cost of running a vehicle.

There is, in fact, a national rental affordability index which is compiled by SGS Economics in partnership with National Shelter, Community Sector Banking. This looks at rental affordability relative to household incomes for the different states in Australia except the Northern Territory. It shows that on average Canberra rentals are what they regard as moderately affordable. Unfortunately, it also shows that in all but one of the eight categories of low to moderate income household types analysed in this report the ACT is a close second next to Sydney when it comes to unaffordability of our rental market; in other words, for anyone on a low income, we are only marginally better than Sydney. Basically this is saying that we have two classes in Canberra: a class who can afford housing in Canberra and an increasing class who cannot.

I now look at public housing. Canberra was built on public housing, and so was much of Australia. Between 1947 and 1961 Australia's housing stock increased by

50 per cent and our population by only 41 per cent over that period. State and commonwealth governments contributed 24 per cent of that increase. Between 1961 and 1976 housing stock increased by a further 46 per cent, again, outstripping the 33 per cent increase in our population. And, again, state and commonwealth governments were 23 per cent of that increase. So governments in the past have put a high value on providing affordable housing, and for most of Canberra's history, most of our housing stock was government supplied.

Unfortunately more recently we have seen a significant decline in government investment in housing. In Canberra public housing made up 12.4 per cent of our housing stock in 1991 just after self-government. By 2001 this had dropped to 12.2 per cent. Public housing now makes up only 7.1 per cent of our housing stock. Between 2010-11 and 2016-17 public housing stock numbers in the ACT decreased from 12,209 to 11,822, a drop of 387 houses. These figures come from the budget papers. While there have been some fluctuations year by year, the trend is downwards.

A recent letter to me from the housing minister highlights the problem. I wrote to her about this issue a month or so ago. She noted that public housing in the ACT is the most highly targeted in Australia with 99 per cent of allocations made to people in greatest need as against the national average of 74 per cent. This results in a high level of rental rebate—that was \$142 million in 2016-17—which means a lower ability to cross-subsidise Housing ACT's operations from its own-source revenue. This means that Housing ACT is going backwards financially.

Curtin University economist Alfred Dockery observed that since 1982 the role of public housing has changed from a tenure offering working families affordable housing opportunities to a residual sector that targets housing assistance for those with the greatest need. There has been a marked change with working age public housing renters increasingly driven from the ranks of those whose employment prospects are relatively poor. We have taken the public out of public housing, and it does not have to be that way. We have set priorities about what we choose to spend public money on—investment in social housing makes sense. It delivers abundant social and economic benefits to tenants and to the wider Canberra community and economy.

Unfortunately the immediate prospect for the future of public housing is not good. The Suburban Land Agency has identified 143 dwelling sites for public housing in 2017-18. During this period, however, 4,120 dwelling sites have been scheduled for release by the ACT government, and this means only 3.5 per cent of new housing stock will be public housing.

In response to this motion I anticipate the minister will tell the Assembly that social housing growth will not take place just in the dwelling sites identified in the housing targets of the CRA and the SLA. That, of course, is true. They will note that the rest of the portfolio is being rejigged and there has been added supply through spot purchases and so on. All of this may well be true, but it is still not enough. As I pointed out earlier, the overall numbers of social housing dwellings in the ACT are falling, as is the proportion of this stock against the overall number of dwellings in Canberra. The public housing capital delivery program is barely replacing the level of

our existing housing stock, so the proportion will continue to decline as our population increases.

It is not just housing assistance for people on very low incomes where there is room for and need for improvement. Our unaffordable housing market also affects people in the second and up into the third income quintiles. Most of these people are the people who serve us coffee, nurse us when we are ill and clean the offices when we go home to have dinner, and who are not eligible for social housing but are struggling in the private rental market. Or they are the new graduates working in the public service who have not yet got the high incomes that many people in Canberra have.

The ACT has the highest proportion of people—48 per cent—who are still in rental stress after receiving commonwealth rent assistance as compared to any other jurisdiction. Commonwealth rent assistance is an income supplement payable to eligible people who rent in the private rental market or community housing recipients of income support payments and people receiving more than the base rate of family tax benefit part A. Single people and couples without children who do not receive income support payments, even though they may be very low income earners, are not, unfortunately, eligible to receive the commonwealth rental assistance.

To highlight how this problem is spreading, in a recent article Macquarie University academic Ben Spies-Butcher summed up the issues with job insecurity and housing insecurity:

As more people work in less stable jobs—either on short-term contracts, or as casuals or in the ‘gig’ economy—so they can find it harder to access stable housing. First, without a stable job it is difficult to get a mortgage, which means you cannot buy a house.

Then:

Insecure work is just as much a problem for renters. If your income fluctuates every week it is hard to manage your finances to ensure you can cover the rent in periods where you have fewer hours or no work. Low paid and underemployed workers, who have less of a financial buffer when things get tight, are more likely to have insecure forms of employment. It is not surprising that this leads to a growing number of people sacrificing essentials to pay the rent.

We all know family and friends who are affected by this unaffordable private rental market—they may be adult kids staying at home longer because they cannot afford to move out, people experiencing a relationship breakdown who can no longer afford to live separately in the way they used to, people who are still renting when they retire, and, as I mentioned, people in insecure employment with low wages or low hours of work.

Of course, I welcome the recent changes to the ACT’s affordable home purchase scheme resulting in, among other things, the affordable housing the government mandates being better targeted to those in need and hopefully affordable for longer. The innovation fund, which will look at home share and things like co-housing, which was part of the parliamentary agreement, is a great initiative. But the problem is that a

lot of people simply cannot afford to pay the deposit for affordable home purchase, and we do not have enough affordable, secure long-term rentals for people unable to get into the small amount of public housing we have.

As I have discussed, the ACT does not have enough affordable housing for all of our residents. The Greens are therefore calling on the government to commit to stop reducing the amount of public housing, to maintain a minimum proportion of social housing, and to increase the supply of affordable rental housing. This is important because safe, secure and affordable housing enables good health and wellbeing, social inclusion, and human housing. I am absolutely sure that everybody in this Assembly would agree that that is something we all want and need.

As well as this, of course, social and affordable rental or non-rental housing promotes economic participation as well as the obvious benefits of being in stable housing that confer to participation in education and employment. Low and moderate income earners do not have a lot of discretionary income left after paying high housing costs. This means that any income they have left over is less likely to be spent on luxury items, which do not contribute to the local economy, such as expensive cars, expensive wine, overseas travel or, in fact, travel anywhere. It is much more likely to be spent on fresh food or at local small businesses. The lower housing costs are for these people, the more of their leftover income will be spent in the local economy, which is good for all business in the ACT.

Canberra can increase its social housing; we have done it before and we can do it again. It is a truism that no more land is being made. However, there is nothing stopping us from using a greater proportion of this valuable and finite resource to deliver an increased supply of social and affordable housing. Particularly given that the ACT is the biggest landowner in the ACT, this is a lever that we should be using more of, and I call upon the Suburban Land Agency to do just that.

Our motion also calls on the ACT government to provide the Assembly with a report about the ACT's participation in the national housing and homelessness agreement, an agreement whereby we receive \$24 a million a year from the federal government. The new agreement specifies that state and territory governments must have a housing strategy which indicates the level of housing supply needed to respond to projected housing demand and outlines the reforms and initiatives that contribute to meeting this need. My motion calls for this information to be made public, which will help everybody involved in housing in the ACT to plan for the future.

In conclusion, social and affordable housing is essential public infrastructure. Canberra's population is rapidly increasing and so must our public housing, our social housing and our affordable housing. That is all we are asking for in this motion.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.35): This is, I am sure you would agree with me, a somewhat interesting motion, as most of them from Ms Le Couteur are. There is a lot in this space that I and Ms Le Couteur agree on, a hell of a lot. I think that probably the biggest difference we have in this space is that I am in opposition and Ms Le Couteur's party is effectively in government. We all know that the Greens are perfectly capable of using their party processes and parliamentary agreement

arrangements to achieve the outcomes that are sought in this motion, but of course the fruits of those efforts would not be as visible. It is much more difficult to beat the drum if you are just making things happen up on the top floor.

The motion notes are interesting, because they are written in some parts to give the government that Ms Le Couteur is in partnership with a pat on the back over the public housing renewal program. Ms Le Couteur notes that there are 1,730 applicants on the housing register waiting list, a level at which it has been hovering for some time. In spite of major rounds of consultations, in-depth reports and ministerial statements about where we are heading, the waiting list continues to hover at around the 1,700 point. I think we would all agree that there would be a growing cohort who really should be applying for public housing, but cannot see that it would be worth their while. They think it would be a waste of their time. Those waiting lists would contain, I believe, hundreds more if more people genuinely believed that they would get a house in a sensible time frame. Many have just given up.

We know that there is a serious problem out on Canberra streets, with last winter's record numbers of homeless people calling on our overnight shelters to help them avoid sleeping outside on the ground or the concrete. And there are those who are couch surfing. The ABS figures are not a genuine representation of what is going on out there in the real world. I think we all know that. Ms Le Couteur does not condemn the government for accepting that situation. In fact, in the earlier part of the motion she gives her government accolades for its success.

The metrics of Ms Le Couteur's motion look a bit interesting. She points out that ACT public housing currently represents 7.1 per cent of the ACT housing stock without suggesting whether that is a good, bad or indifferent level compared with the recorded needs. I seem to recall that the Greens have long called for a much higher level.

I am proud of what I have achieved as shadow minister for housing. There is a limit to what a shadow minister in any area can actually achieve, because we do not have access to any of the levers within the directorate. Nevertheless, I am proud of a number of the outcomes, micro-outcomes, that I have been able to achieve for a number of constituents who have come to me in the hope that I could solve their problems. It must be said that I could not have achieved any of those outcomes without the assistance of the minister. Although we are sometimes at each other's throats in here, I genuinely thank the minister for assistance with a number of individual issues that had somehow slipped through the cracks. Obviously, we will be saying that they should not have slipped through the cracks, but sometimes they do. I genuinely thank the minister and the directorate for assisting us with some of those matters.

I would like to think that one of the things that I have achieved is to reignite a genuinely robust conversation within the Liberal Party on housing and housing policy. I know that Ms Le Couteur and many others on the left have a perception that we evil conservatives do not really care about social housing and public housing. I can guarantee you that that is not the case. Isn't it ironic that in the 17 years of this Labor

and Labor-Greens government, this progressive government, the public housing proportion has gone down from 12.2 per cent to 7.1 per cent? Is that not ironic?

Mr Rattenbury: No.

MR PARTON: These are figures that came from Ms Le Couteur's notes, so you can take it up with her, Mr Rattenbury, if you want to.

Our reality is that over the past 20 years the governing party that has presided over the highest proportion of public housing stock as a percentage of the total housing stock is the Canberra Liberals. Isn't that fascinating?

Ms Berry interjecting—

MR PARTON: The highest figure that you quoted in the past 20 years was from 2001. Is the figure correct or is it incorrect?

Ms Le Couteur points out that of the 4,120 dwelling sites to be released in 2017-18, 143 will be assigned for public housing. Again, this motion fails to offer any critique of the government's outcome target for this area. I would ask Ms Le Couteur why she has not called upon this Assembly to condemn the government for not meeting the targets that she has asked us to support via this motion. I would concede that she has made those calls in other ways and other places in recent times.

We all know very well that this government has all the tools at its disposal to grow the supply of affordable rental housing. But of course, funding is severely constrained. And on the subject of funding, we must remind ourselves that the proceeds from the sale of the 1,300 inner city dwellings for the public housing renewal program get ploughed into the capital metro project. Nothing from those proceeds will be dedicated to the public housing supply; it all goes to the tram. We are assured that there is overwhelming community support. This compels the government to find additional capital funding from other sources to implement the public housing renewal program, a program worth around \$608 million.

There is no denying that some residents of public housing living in old and squalid properties do need a response from government. Our inboxes abound with pleas for help from public housing residents seeking relief from all sorts of things: from poor maintenance, from feral animal infestations, from poor maintenance services, from feelings of neglect. Many of us have had to deal with instances where the mental and physical wellbeing of residents has been severely affected. Instead, the proceeds from the sales of old public housing stock all get fed into the tram service, and the poor old ratepayer has to pick up the difference to help people in substandard accommodation and pick up the bill for the public housing renewal program. Again, this motion is silent on these issues, but just blandly calls on the government to do better. I think the government should be doing better.

The motion contains some noble sentiments, the principles of which none of us here would oppose. I must highlight that, broadly speaking, we support what Ms Le Couteur is saying here. We must remind ourselves always of what the real

problem is. There are many reasons that we find ourselves facing these housing affordability hurdles. One of them is the government's strangulation of residential land supply in favour of exorbitant profits. It is one of the problems. This motion is silent on the blatant manipulation of land prices that neglects opportunities to address the affordable housing requirement. The Canberra Liberals believe that housing affordability should be tackled from a number of fronts and that one of the big fronts is the planning space in addition to the housing portfolio.

We do support the thrust of the motion in regard to reporting and methodologies for assessing housing supply requirements and the directorates who are accountable for such work. Transparency is crucial to helping those in public housing and those waiting for housing assistance. There is much data that we have to laboriously extract through questioning processes that could easily be provided by this government. Ms Le Couteur's assistance would be invaluable on that front.

In conclusion, this side of the chamber will not be opposing the motion, for it does offer the prospect of easing the circumstances of those suffering from housing stress.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (4.42): I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing this important issue into the Assembly. I move:

Omit paragraph (2)(a), substitute:

“(a) commit to growing social housing stock in Canberra through development and purchases in both new and existing suburbs;”.

I am proud of the public housing we have here in the ACT. It is a significant and far-reaching program that provides tangible benefits to thousands of people in Canberra. Through the ACT government's housing stock of around 11,800 properties, we support 10,650 households in public housing, 744 households in community housing and more than 300 people in supported accommodation. In 2016-17, Housing ACT provided \$142 million to the ACT community in the form of rent subsidies.

The contribution to an individual's life outcomes by having a stable home can never be overstated. Without a home, it is hard to get up in the morning, it is hard to go to school, and it is hard to maintain community connections. It is almost impossible to get a job without a roof over your head. Your health and wellbeing can be compromised. Secure and affordable housing is a fundamental prerequisite for people to be included and participate in the community. The benefits provided by public housing have a ripple effect through the city and across generations.

This is why the government wants to see as many people in safe and stable housing as possible. I want to see people supported so that they do not become homeless. I want to see a thriving, affordable housing market in the ACT where fewer people are in rental mortgage stress. However, the gap between the supply of low cost housing and demand among low income households does continue to grow. This is the focus of

our new housing strategy, which will build on the government's achievements of the past decade.

I am looking forward to releasing the new housing strategy later this year. However, members will know that work has already been done towards building this strategy. Expressions of interest for funding under the \$1 million innovation fund are now open. Successful projects will expand affordable rental options in the ACT, including home sharing, co-housing developments and growing the affordable rental market.

New public, community and affordable targets as part of the land release program will ensure continued growth for the community and public housing sectors in greenfield and infill land release, ensuring that land is set aside for the growth in our new and growing suburbs.

While the government strives for better outcomes through these initiatives, it is important to note that the ACT is well placed compared to other jurisdictions. Canberra has the highest rate of public housing per head in the country. During a time when other jurisdictions are transferring or selling government-owned public housing, the vast majority of public housing remains in public hands in Canberra. Mr Parton pointed out the numbers that Ms Le Couteur had quoted around public housing numbers in the ACT. Of course, it was the Liberal Party in the ACT that sold off over 1,000 public housing units when they were last in government. That is something to keep in mind should they be in government again.

ACT public housing is the most highly targeted in Australia, with 98 per cent of new tenancies being allocated to people in the greatest need, compared to 75 per cent nationally. The number of people on the ACT housing register tracks well below the national figure as a percentage of stock: 21 per cent in the ACT compared to the national average of 48 per cent.

I am proud of the work that is being done to help people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. In 2015-16, the government partnered with the homelessness sector to intervene early before a person's situation reached a crisis point. Evidence shows that once a person's situation becomes acute, particularly when they lose their house, it takes more time, more money and more resources to get them back on their feet. The effect of this targeted and sustained effort by Canberra's homelessness sector means that the ACT saw a decline in people classified as homeless on census night by about eight per cent, 142 people. This was during a time when the ACT population rose by 11 per cent and when homelessness grew nationally by more than 13 per cent.

Canberra's central intake model has a lot to do with this success. OneLink is the central intake service for a range of human services, including homelessness, disability services and family support. OneLink prioritises each person's needs and connects them to the right service. Every time I talk to people in the community about homelessness, I talk about OneLink. I want to encourage every member in this place to remember the number and save it onto their phone: 1800 176 469. If you know anyone who is sleeping rough, in danger of losing their housing or needing some form

of housing assistance, please refer them to OneLink or encourage them to visit the OneLink website.

The government is investing in public housing. The public housing renewal program is the largest investment in public housing renewal in the ACT. I have talked about this program a fair bit, because it is a big deal. This is a substantial investment of \$600 million in renewing our older public housing properties. By the end of the program next year, 1,288 old, inefficient and outdated public housing dwellings will have been replaced with modern, energy efficient homes. Public housing tenants need adequate homes that meet their needs as much as anyone else, and this program, a program of renewal, will continue.

I want to make sure that our public housing works for our tenants. I want public houses to continue to improve tenants' quality of life. The government is looking at some of the long-term questions facing public housing in the ACT. How can we make these dwellings more efficient and low maintenance? How do we meet future demand? How do we give tenants more choice? How do we make sure that as a community we assure the welfare of our public housing tenants? And how do we ensure we maintain harmony in our communities as well? These are the key challenges that our future asset management will address to build diverse and vibrant local communities, break down barriers that prevent social connection and provide opportunities for greater participation in critical education, employment and social activities.

Accommodating a growing demand for affordable and social housing is one of the challenges that we face as a growing city. The ACT is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. On the back of strong economic growth under this government, Canberra is growing by over 5,000 people each year. This presents challenges across government as the growth occurs. In my own portfolios, I see that demand grow across the board in demand for education at all levels.

This motion proposes that our social housing stock be benchmarked as a proportion of the total housing stock in the ACT. I want to see our public housing grow, and I am confident that under a new housing strategy, new land release targets and good asset management, the government will achieve this.

There are many competing priorities. It is the job of government to ensure that these challenges are responded to in a responsible and measured way. This allows us to build and provide housing for those who need it most. Investment in housing must take into consideration other important community priorities such as education, health and safety. At the same time, we are growing community housing, affordable rental and affordable purchase. Our housing investment needs to include many different forms of tenure that provide accommodation choices for Canberrans.

This government has recognised the important role community housing plays in providing affordable options for households, transferring 132 properties to CHC Affordable Housing, 53 properties to Argyle community housing and eight properties to Project Independence, and headleasing over 600 properties to the specialist and community housing sectors. While stock numbers may fluctuate from

year to year, I am committed to growing and renewing the community and public housing sectors in the long term.

There is not a day that has gone by since I was elected to this place that I have not committed myself to ensure and to continue to ensure that there is better support for people who need it most. That includes public tenants. I am continually defending and speaking up for public housing tenants, no matter where they live in this city. I will do that again today. I am excited by the work the government is doing and the opportunity that all of us have to make a real difference for all Canberrans. I urge the Assembly to support my amendment to Ms Le Couteur's motion.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11

Noes 12

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

Amendment negatived.

Original question resolved in the affirmative.

Blood donation regulations

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (4.57): I seek leave to amend my notice on the notice paper.

Leave granted.

MR STEEL: I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) there is a shortage of locally-supplied blood reserves in Australia, with the National Blood Authority increasingly importing blood supplies from overseas;
- (b) last year, the overwhelming majority of Australians and almost three-quarters of Canberrans rejected legal discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning Australians;

- (c) discrimination remains for gay men in relation to blood donation restrictions. In order to donate blood, men who have sex with men are required to remain abstinent for a 12 month deferral period, regardless of their individual risk and including those in low-risk monogamous relationships;
 - (d) all blood donations in Australia and other developed nations, regardless of the sexuality of the donor, are already automatically tested for HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases; and
 - (e) the recommendation to reduce the deferral period from 12 months to six months in the 2012 *Review of Australian Blood Donor Deferrals relating to Sexual Activity*, conducted by the Australian Red Cross Blood Service, was rejected by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA);
- (2) also notes that:
- (a) numerous medical advances, and the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) which was placed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme on 1 April 2018, and public awareness initiatives have significantly increased testing rates of HIV/AIDS;
 - (b) the ACT PrEP trial funded in the 2016-17 Budget is underway, to provide access to sexual health and blood borne virus vaccination, testing and treatment for vulnerable and priority populations in the ACT, with 315 participants at the start of March 2018;
 - (c) the window period between contraction and detection of HIV/AIDS has been dramatically reduced to an estimated 22 days, according to the Australian Red Cross Blood Service, aided by rapid testing for HIV/AIDS;
 - (d) multiple countries have now significantly reduced or eliminated mandatory deferral periods for gay blood donors, including the United Kingdom, which reduced its deferral period from 12 months to three months in November 2017; and
 - (e) blood plasma can be kept for up to 12 months and therefore can be tested and placed in quarantine until the detection period has passed. France and Israel have therefore eliminated all deferral periods for plasma-only donations for gay men who have been in a monogamous relationship for the previous four months;
- (3) further notes that the ACT Government has, along with the Victorian Government, raised this issue in the Council of Australian Governments' Health Council, and another Review of Australian Blood Donor Deferrals relating to Sexual Activity by the Australian Red Cross Blood Service will be undertaken; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Government to write, on behalf of the Assembly, calling on the TGA and Federal Minister for Health to:
- (a) consider a reduction of the deferral period for non-plasma blood donations to three months, in line with the recent policy of the United Kingdom;
 - (b) consider the elimination of all deferral periods for plasma-only donations, in line with the policy of France and Israel;
 - (c) consider a greater role for individual risk-based assessments in the blood donation process; and

- (d) adopt the recommendations of the expert panel undertaking the Australian Red Cross Blood Service Review of Australian Blood Donor Deferrals relating to Sexual Activity.

I want to start this speech by thanking the amazing blood donors of Canberra who altruistically make the decision to help people who are ill in our community and quite literally save lives in our hospitals every day. We are very proud that the ACT has the most generous rate of blood donation in the entire country, with over 15,000 active donors and almost 38,000 donations over 2016-17.

Just last month Australia's second dedicated blood plasma donation centre was opened in the centre of Canberra, providing a welcoming space that we hope will encourage more blood donors to visit. We know that there are many fantastic businesses, government and non-government organisations in Canberra who encourage their staff to be involved in blood donor drives during work time, many participating in blood donation challenges. But I know from personal experience that this can often lead to inadvertent conversations which can be quite difficult in the workplace. Not all staff are allowed to donate blood and it is often with much embarrassment that employees who happen to be gay or bisexual must disclose their sexuality to their workplace or come up with another excuse as to why they cannot donate blood. In Australia men who have sex with men must remain abstinent for 12 months in order to donate blood, and this rules out a significant proportion of that community from taking part in supporting our blood supply.

On the face of it, it seems crazy. The Australian Red Cross blood donor service currently relies on blood from just three per cent of the population to maintain our national blood reserves, and it is increasingly being put in the position of having to rely on imported blood to meet the health needs of Australians. The Therapeutic Goods Administration, through their policies on blood donation, is excluding a very significant cohort of people in our community from donating blood safely based on the latest research and technology.

In Australia blood donation is, quite rightly, an entirely altruistic process, with donors often receiving just a drink, a biscuit and heartfelt thanks for their lifesaving donation. Presently, demand for blood in Australia increases by 11 per cent a year while local donor supplied blood is only increasing by around five per cent.

There is a shortage of local blood donations in Australia, with reserves regularly reaching critical levels, particularly for rare blood types or for all blood types around winter, as colds and flus increase blood demand but may prevent many regular donors from donating. This is forcing the National Blood Authority to look overseas for blood products, with 44 per cent of all immunoglobulin—Ig—used in 2016-17 purchased from overseas suppliers, and a majority will be imported by the year's end. This plasma product is critical, as it treats people with neurological, immunological and haematological conditions.

Likewise about a quarter of intravenous immunoglobulin supplies are imported. These are used particularly for large transfusions in emergencies where there is a rapid loss of blood. Obtaining blood from overseas also raises ethical concerns about blood

donations from paid donors—often vulnerable people—rather than altruistic donors. It is an issue which was highlighted in the recent *Four Corners* program “Blood business”.

While reviewing restrictions on local donations is unlikely to solve this issue by itself, it could help to increase Australian donation numbers and reduce the cost to the National Blood Authority, which spends an astounding half a billion dollars annually to procure the shortfall in local blood products from overseas.

There is no doubt that the Therapeutic Goods Administration have an important role in ensuring that blood donation practices are evidence based and that our blood supply is safe. However, they also have a role in ensuring that their policies remain up to date with the latest evidence and technology. The initial ban on blood donation by men who have sex with men was established in 1985 in Australia during the height of the AIDS epidemic. Men who had sex with men were more at risk as a population group of HIV/AIDS infection, so restrictions then put on them donating blood were arguably justified at the time, as little was medically known during the crisis.

In 2000 the outright ban was replaced with a “deferral period” that mandated a period of abstinence for men who have sex with men of 12 months to account for the “window period” between which HIV/AIDS is contracted and the point that it becomes detectable via antibodies in a blood test. This one-year deferral period is still effectively a ban for many gay men. This motion highlights that things have changed dramatically in the past 18 years.

All donated blood is now tested for sexually transmitted diseases. Two tests are used for HIV/AIDS—a nucleic acid test, which has a short 5.6-day window, and a serology test, which has a 22-day window. This means that it is much easier to detect HIV/AIDS than it has been in the past, and it is much more quickly tested. The availability of rapid testing also means that gay men are much more aware of their HIV status than has been possible in the past.

In addition HIV is now a preventable disease. There are many good drugs that can dramatically reduce the viral load in blood to undetectable levels, in some cases, thereby reducing the risk of transmission, particularly through the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis—PrEP—which, as an HIV prevention measure, has reduced and will reduce the risk for people with exposure to HIV.

The New South Wales trial of PrEP is a good example. It began two years ago and has shown a reduction in HIV diagnoses by almost a quarter. The ACT has been part of the trial since March last year, funded by the ACT government. It currently has 315 participants and it will continue until June next year. It is also fantastic that the federal Minister for Health has added PrEP to the pharmaceutical benefits scheme. It starts this month and it will reduce the cost of this drug which we expect to be used much more widely in the future. Part of the requirements of taking PrEP is that participants must take a blood test every three months; which keeps users informed of their HIV status, as well as the government and community health organisations.

A lot has changed, and a lot will continue to change in terms of medical advances since the 12-month deferral period was established. The change is being reflected in the policy response to restrictions on gay blood donors by governments overseas. In November last year the United Kingdom reduced their 12-month deferral period to just three months. France and Israel have now allowed plasma-only donations by gay men with no deferral period at all, if the donor in question has only had one sexual partner in the past four months.

As plasma lasts for up to a year, there is plenty of time to provide adequate safeguards after the donation is made. Donations are quarantined for 2½ months in those countries, at which point the donor is again tested to ensure that they are safe. These policies are currently under review, with the intention of eventually removing all restrictions.

Likewise Canada's new Liberal government is currently investing \$3.5 million into blood donation research, with the intention of eventually eliminating any deferral periods. In Chile, Mexico, Spain and Italy, all donors, regardless of sexuality, can donate blood. They simply fill out a questionnaire which assesses the risk of their recent sexual behaviour.

It is important to note that under the TGA's current guidelines in Australia, the Australian Red Cross Blood Service is currently forced to exclude thousands of healthy people in low-risk monogamous relationships from donating blood. In contrast, current guidelines allow some heterosexual people to donate blood when they may have had multiple sexual partners.

Despite the medical advances there is no guarantee that the Therapeutic Goods Administration will change from their current position. In 2012 the Australian Red Cross Blood Service review had already recommended that Australia's deferral period be reduced from a year to six months. Unfortunately, this recommendation was rejected by the TGA.

Thanks to the leadership of Victorian health ministers and our minister for health, Meegan Fitzharris, through the COAG health ministers council, another Australian Red Cross Blood Service review into the guidelines will now be brought forward, led by an expert panel, with a resolution expected by the end of the year.

Today's motion is important, in order to say, as an Assembly, that we support the recommendations of that expert review being adopted, and that reducing and removing restrictions should be considered, just as other countries have done. It will send a strong message from the ACT that, in light of medical advances, the policy change we have seen overseas does need to be considered here.

This motion also calls on the TGA to consider how individual risk-based approaches could be used to improve donor screening processes. Gay men in long-term, monogamous relationships are at lower risk of HIV transmission compared to single men with multiple sexual partners; so consideration should be given to treating those people differently, as has been done in France and Israel. At the moment there is a

blanket restriction on them donating blood, except if they do not engage in any sexual activity at all.

I want to finish by saying that the current policy mandated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration requires gay men to abstain from sex for a full year if they want to donate blood. I want to say today that I think that is a form of discrimination. The TGA's position in relation to treating men who have sex with men as donors differently is not consistent with the approach of other countries and the evidence and medical advances, as well as the expert panel recommendations from the Australian Red Cross Blood Service.

It is time for change. Just as we have challenged discrimination in our laws through enacting marriage equality, we should be continuing to question why it is that discrimination against the LGBTIQ community in our health system continues, especially when it cannot be justified.

Current restrictions on blood donations are discriminatory, outdated and stigmatising for gay men, who, like everyone else, want to do the right thing by donating blood. I hope that the Therapeutic Goods Administration accepts the recommendation of the Australian Red Cross Blood Service's important review into this issue. This would enable a numerically significant cohort of potential donors to help save more lives, whilst maintaining the integrity and safety of the blood supply.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.09): I move:

Omit all words after (4), substitute:

“(4) refers the matter to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services for inquiry and report.”.

Mr Steel's motion is not entirely without merit. I thank him for bringing it forward today. With science and medical technology ever improving and developing, it is possible that past concerns about, in this case, the risk of blood contamination ending up in the veins of innocent patients may be somewhat allayed. I can also appreciate the points that Mr Steel makes about discrimination, the need for more blood donors and the need for more blood.

Let me quickly make the point that it is not only gay and bisexual men who are excluded from eligibility to donate blood; people under the age of 18 and over 70 cannot give blood. So is that ageism? People who weigh under 50 kilograms cannot give blood. People who have had a tattoo in the past four months cannot give blood. Pregnant and post-natal women cannot give blood, nor can people who have a serious heart condition, people with low iron counts or people who have lived in the UK for a period of six months or more between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 1996. I understand that my colleague Mr Hanson falls into that category.

If you have ever—that is ever—injected drugs recreationally, you cannot give blood. One lapse at a party in your undergraduate years makes you ineligible forever to be a blood donor. If you travel overseas in the four months before you intend to give blood, take a rain check. There are many countries that, if you visit, will make you ineligible

to give blood. Because of the travel plans of some members of this place, including Mr Steel, or the past travels of people in this place, including Mr Steel, you would need to take a raincheck because of the possibility of contact with malaria. There are many good clinical reasons for those exclusion criteria. But I am not a clinician and I am in no position to make an informed judgment about their bearing on whether people should or should not give blood.

I notice that Mr Steel has said that a Red Cross review of the criteria for blood donations will be brought forward. We hope that will be resolved by the end of the year. That is the best mechanism that we have for dealing with these issues. At the moment the criteria are tried and tested. It is essential that we err on the side of safety. I can understand this: the Red Cross blood service has an impeccable record. They must maintain that record in order that patients who need blood transfusions can trust what they are getting. The last thing that anyone wants is for the patients to receive contaminated blood that makes them even sicker or, worse, kills them.

I do not want anyone to think that I am opposing this just for the sake of it. I am not someone who is closed to the impact of science and medical advancements. I have seen and have benefited from medical advancements myself. I have seen my children benefit from medical advancements. I also have family members who are haemophiliac and who are very dependent upon a reliable blood service. Nevertheless, I am not able to judge the worth of the clinical criteria that Mr Steel refers to but did not really mention in his motion. I am unable to judge the veracity of the clinical exclusion criteria that he did mention.

I also note that Mr Steel has already amended his motion. This casts even more doubt I have on the veracity of some of the information held in that.

I propose that this motion be referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services, of which Mr Steel himself is the chair. My office contacted Mr Steel's office and Ms Le Couteur's office early this morning about this proposal. I have heard nothing from them. I presume that the silence means that there is not agreement on this.

This would give the Assembly a chance to explore the issues, take expert advice and evidence, and then possibly even take into consideration the issues raised by the foreshadowed Red Cross review before making recommendations to this Assembly. Writing to the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the commonwealth health minister is a little bit of an exercise in pointlessness if we are not properly informed. It would be a waste of the Assembly's and the commonwealth's time. It would give the commonwealth the impression that this is an Assembly that acts on a whim and is impetuous and that it does not take a policy-led and scientific approach to making such decisions.

I am not suggesting that Mr Steel's motion is any of these things. I am suggesting that this Assembly needs to be better informed on the subject before it makes a decision. Therefore, I recommend the referral of this matter to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services for inquiry and report.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (5.16): I am pleased to speak on this important issue. Blood donations are crucial to support the health of our community. Our health system could not function effectively without them. The Red Cross tells us that every blood donation can help save up to three lives, with the blood you donate having the potential to be made into 22 different medical treatments. Whether it is people who have been involved in serious accidents, those who have complications from cancer or pregnancy or others who have chronic medical conditions that mean they need blood products readily to stay healthy, blood donations can help people from all walks of life.

Given that the need for blood products is not going to go away and is likely to increase as our population grows, it makes sense to accept donations from as many people as possible. In this context I thank Mr Steel for raising the ethical issues of importing blood from other countries, where almost certainly the donors are more vulnerable than the donors in Australia. As a separate issue, it would be great if we could have funded the Australian Red Cross so that we did have a better local supply of blood. But I appreciate that that is outside the ACT government's remit.

I get back to the matter at hand. Of course the safety of the donor and the recipient must always be the number one priority. But if advice from the experts is that there are safe ways to reduce restrictions on who can donate, then this clearly should be supported. At the moment the criteria on who can be a blood donor include restrictions relating to age, weight and medical history. There are a number of very sensible restrictions in place for those who are on medication, people with low iron levels and a range of other circumstances. The ability to donate or the length of the wait period will be determined based on each person's individual circumstances.

However, many experts have raised questions about the current restrictions placed on gay men before they can become blood donors. It seems that, given the advances in medical testing and treatment, this restriction is not so much an issue of safety but more of discrimination. At the moment gay men must abstain from male-to-male sex for 12 months before they are eligible to donate blood. This restriction was imposed because men who have sex with men were considered to be at a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections and, in particular, HIV.

It is important to acknowledge that, as access to contraception and HIV testing has increased, the rates of HIV in the gay community continue to decrease, as is the case across the general community. We need to recognise that there are many men who are in monogamous homosexual relationships and who would clearly be considered to be at a very low risk of infection. By placing a blanket ban on the whole gay community we attach a stigma to that group. We also limit the group of potential blood donors.

The reality is that there is some level of unknown risk of STIs—sexually transmitted infections—with all sexual partners, both homosexual and heterosexual. It is absolutely right for the blood donor service to impose restrictions on blood donations based on an informed risk assessment. But we should be open to changing these restrictions when our evidence base and technology improves.

As Mr Steel's motion notes, in 2012 the Australian Red Cross undertook an independent review of blood donor referrals relating to sexual activity. The review was chaired by the dean of medicine at Monash University and included experts from across the medical profession. This review was undertaken on the understanding that the primary concern was the safety of blood, blood products and the public.

The review recommended that the deferral period for men who have sex with other men should be reduced from 12 months to six months, based on the maximum testing window needed to detect STIs including HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. This would apply a safety margin in accordance with the TGA guidelines for the prevention of transmission of infectious diseases.

This review was provided to the TGA in 2014, which rejected the recommendations to reduce the deferral period for gay blood donors at that time. In its response the TGA cited concerns about increasing the risk of infection. The blood service committed to carry out another review in five years, which has been brought forward at the request of the COAG Health Council.

Since 2014 there have been significant changes in medical technologies and treatments: our ability to detect infections in blood products has improved; testing rates for HIV have continued to increase; and contraception is more widely available, particularly with the very recent inclusion of PrEP on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme.

We also have a precedent for reducing the deferral period, as Mr Steel has noted, with the deferral time in the UK being reduced to three months and France removing deferral periods for low-risk individuals who give plasma donations. With all these factors feeding into the new review, I am hopeful that we will see even stronger evidence to support the reduction of deferral periods for men who have sex with other men to be able to donate blood.

I would like to raise one other issue today as part of this discussion. Of course men who have sex with other men are not the only group considered a high risk for blood donation. Similar restrictions also apply to sex workers, who will be covered by the blood service review, which is good.

However, there is one group which is outside the scope of the review: it is people who have a history of intravenous drug use. The current questionnaire before you can donate blood asks whether you have "ever used drugs by injection or been injected, even once, with drugs not prescribed by a doctor or a dentist." Under the current eligibility criteria, if you answer yes to this question, you will never be eligible to donate blood. And of course it is true that people with a history of injecting drug use are at a significantly higher risk of a number of serious infections, particularly hep B and C. However, given improvements in screening and detection, it may well be possible that someone who once injected drugs 20 years ago and has been tested for infections could be a safe and effective blood donor and could help to save someone else's life.

I spoke earlier about the stigma that has been imposed on the gay community because they have been designated a “high risk” group for STIs, particularly HIV. The same issues of stigma exist for injecting drug users. It is important that we do not exclude people from these ways that they may wish to make a very meaningful contribution to the community in which they live, particularly given that we need all the blood donations we can get, safely.

Given that a review is already planned, I hope that the evidence base for a lifetime donor exclusion of anyone who has a history of injecting drug use could be looked at. I am pleased to see that Mr Steel’s motion calls for a greater role for individual risk-based assessments in the blood donations process. That method could apply across all groups currently considered “high risk” for blood donation.

We absolutely accept that there should be restrictions on who can donate blood, and that public and donor safety is always the primary concern. However, by making definite statements about a group of people who have all had different circumstances and life experiences is potentially discriminatory. These kinds of broad brush restrictions also limit the size of the donor pool at a time when we know we need all the donations we can get.

I thank Mr Steel for bringing this issue to the Assembly today. The Greens are pleased to support this motion. We hope the outcomes of the latest review will help make better informed policy and reduce the barriers to blood donation for some in our community.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (5.25): I, too, thank Mr Steel for bringing this important motion to the Assembly, not only generating debate in the chamber but also in our community this morning, which is terrific. As we know, blood services are a critical part of our health system. The reality is that people from all walks of life will or may at some point in their life rely on donated blood, or blood-based products such as plasma to manage serious health conditions such as cancer, blood diseases and immune disorders or even to save their life in the event of a medical emergency. In this context, ensuring the supply of blood is an important part of making sure that our health system is able to treat those people in need. As part of this, we need to be looking at what we can do to increase the reserves of an array of blood products in Australia.

Millions of people across the country owe their lives to blood donors. As the responsible minister I am certainly thankful to all those in our community who take the time to give blood. During the last financial year 15,020 active blood donors generously donated 14,323 plasma donations, 717 platelet donations and 22,793 whole-blood donations. In fact, the Canberra mobile blood donor service is one of the best performers in Australia and enjoys the strong support of many blood donors who work in the many government departments across our city.

The ACT has also strongly supported the work of Australian Red Cross Blood Service’s red25 program in achieving its ambitious target to provide at least

25 per cent of donations via community and organisation groups. Red25 is the group donation program of the Red Cross Blood Service, with the purpose of uniting workplaces, community groups, schools and universities around Australia to assist in saving lives through blood donation.

Since the establishment of the centralised Sydney processing centre in 2011 all blood donated within the Canberra region is transported to Sydney for processing, testing and distribution. Blood and blood products are then distributed to hospital and health facilities in the Canberra region and, for the most part, ACT blood donors provide blood products that often exceed the volume of blood products actually used within the ACT. Although this demonstrates just how extraordinarily generous the ACT community is, we know that as our community grows and the prevalence of more complex health conditions also increases as our community ages we need to do more to meet the need for an array of blood products. For this, we must continue to increase donor rates.

Innovation in the donation process and finding new ways to make donating blood and plasma more appealing is something we know the Australian Red Cross is already looking closely at. As part of this, Australia's second dedicated blood plasma donation centre opened and commenced operations just last week in Civic. It is the second of its kind in Australia and, indeed, the southern hemisphere. With the opening of this new dedicated centre we have a very exciting opportunity for our region to be involved in leading Australia-first innovations in plasma collections. Plasma is set to become Australia's most needed blood product in just a few years, and is used for 18 different lifesaving treatments.

Although it is understood that clinical demand for red blood cell donations is not as high as it was in previous years, the demand for treatments that use plasma-derived products is increasing by 11 percent each year. That is why the Australian Red Cross Blood Service is also urging more Australians to become plasma donors to help meet this growing demand.

Even before the new plasma centre opened the Red Cross Blood Service already had 80 donors booked in ready to donate plasma that day. And as was recently reported, one 24-year-old Canberran generously provided his 111th plasma donation that day and is one of the youngest Australians to have passed the 100 donations mark. I am pleased to note the Australian Red Cross will be trialling innovations to make the donation process more efficient.

In addressing some of the issues surrounding a reduction or elimination of discrimination in the mandatory deferral period for blood donation for gay men, as this motion notes, there have been numerous medical advances in prevention and reducing the transmission rates of HIV in recent years, specifically, as Mr Steel noted, the use of PrEP. As members might be aware, a trial of PrEP commenced in the ACT in September last year, and it is pleasing to see increased access to this highly effective prevention tool for HIV both through the trial and through its affordability, given it has now been listed on the PBS. This is a significant milestone.

The ACT government provided just over \$112,000 in funding to support the trial locally. This was part of a broader measure in the 2016-17 budget, allocating \$1.3 million in funding over four years to expand access to sexual health and bloodborne virus vaccination, testing and treatment for vulnerable and priority populations in the ACT.

Prevention and reducing the transmission rates of HIV and other bloodborne viruses and sexually transmissible infections is a priority for the government. In 2016 ACT Health developed a statement of priorities that has helped to guide an evidence-based approach to the prevention and treatment of bloodborne viruses and sexually transmitted infections in the ACT.

Committing to the trial of PrEP in the ACT was a key part of this statement of priorities. Although it is too early to assess any impact of PrEP in the ACT, in New South Wales, where implementation started in early 2016, there is convincing early evidence of effectiveness. This includes a 24 per cent reduction in HIV diagnoses in gay and bisexual men when compared to the average for the same period in the past six years.

With medical advances such as the PrEP, as the motion further notes, through the Council of Australian Government's health council meetings last year the ACT government joined the Victorian government in raising the issue of mandatory deferral periods for gay blood donors. As a result, last year the health council called on the blood service to bring forward its review plan for 2018. As we have heard, the blood service has now re-established an independent expert review committee to again look into deferral policies relating to sexual activity of blood donors, with an original review conducted in 2012. As part of this review it is understood that the committee will revisit the appropriate length and structure of deferrals for male-to-male sex and other sexual-activity-based risks and review international practice and research on this issue.

In addition, the ACT government acknowledges and agrees to the calls in Mr Steel's motion to write to advocate for a reduction or elimination of the mandatory deferral period. As the minister responsible, I am glad to be able to advocate for this important change against this outdated requirement.

I note Mrs Dunne's amendment to refer this matter to the committee. I certainly note the good work of the committee. The motion calls for the ACT government to write on behalf of the Assembly to the TGA and the federal health minister to consider the elimination of all deferral periods, consider a greater role for individual risk-based assessments and, importantly adopt the recommendations of the expert panel undertaking this work. Even with all the good intent in the world I do not believe the Assembly should replicate the work of the expert panel that has been established nationally, and the Assembly would do well today to encourage the federal minister to implement the recommendations of the expert panel when it reports by the end of this year.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.33): Discrimination against our LGBTIQ community is something Canberrans resoundingly rejected last year during the postal plebiscite on marriage equality. Rightly so, our community stood against the view that same sex relationships are different or inferior. However, today I speak on yet more discrimination that affects our LGBTIQ community, specifically gay men. Currently men who have had sex with other men in the preceding 12 months are unable to donate blood in Australia. This blanket ban is unnecessary given scientific breakthroughs and community awareness of safe sex practices. I join my colleague Chris Steel in calling for a re-evaluation of the current policy.

Giving blood is a lifesaving sacrifice; a small act that can affect so many lives and help so many people. What does it say about us as a community when we are so desperate for blood donations yet we reject on spurious grounds those who are willing and able to donate? Is it really too hard to minimise the supposed risk of letting queer men donate? Other countries have sorted it out, yet we are told that queer men are a risk to us, that their blood is worth less than ours.

There is currently a shortage of blood reserves in Australia. Increasingly the National Blood Authority is importing supplies from overseas. Locally the number of Canberrans donating blood has fallen by 17 per cent since 2005, while across Australia the number of new donors has been decreasing by 30 per cent each year since 2008. The ACT blood supply is propped up by a number of repeat donors giving generously multiple times a year. I am, in fact, one of these repeat donors. It is vital that we maintain adequate blood reserves for Australians in need. Given this shortage, now is the perfect time to revisit the current policy on receiving blood donations from same-sex-attracted men.

The current law is a blanket ban that prevents any man who has had sex with another man in the past 12 months from donating blood. This 12-month waiting period is known as the deferral period. Given the time frame, this is essentially a total ban on gay and bisexual men from donating blood. This is regardless of factors including monogamous relationships and consistent safe sex practices. This is unfair. The deferral period was put in place in Australia in 2000. Prior to this all sexually active gay men were banned from donating blood indefinitely. This policy came about at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS remains the reason that gay men are still subject to this 12-month waiting period. The reason for the current policy is a risk prevention policy. Gay men remain the most likely group to contract the virus in Australia. Currently, all donated blood in Australia is screened for HIV/AIDS as well as other sexually transmitted and bloodborne diseases. The safety of those receiving donated blood undoubtedly must remain the key priority of any policy regulating blood donation. However, given the scientific advancement since 2000 this does not negate gay men from donating.

The window between contraction and detection of HIV/AIDS has been drastically reduced to approximately 22 days according to the Australian Red Cross Blood Service. All donated blood to the Australian Red Cross is screened, which detects the

HIV virus even before antibodies are produced by the body. Numerous medical advances, including the use of PrEP, as well as public awareness campaigns, have significantly increased the number of people getting tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Given these technological advances, the current requirements are unnecessarily discriminatory. They perpetuate the stigma that gay and bisexual men are inherently irresponsible and engage in risky behaviour. The discrimination is blatant and unnecessary. For example, compare a gay man who is in a long-term, monogamous relationship and has had a recent sexual health check with a straight man or woman who has frequent, unprotected sex with multiple partners and does not get frequent sexual health check-ups. That gay man would be unable to donate blood whilst the straight man or woman would.

A straight person is trusted to make their own decisions about their own sexual safety and that of others. They are trusted to truthfully disclose their likely potential exposure to HIV/AIDS. This lack of trust for gay men stems from a continued ingrained homophobia within our society. Our donation laws should be based on an individual risk assessment and testing, not out-of-date stereotypes or the gender of your partner.

A review of Australian blood donor deferrals relating to sexual activity conducted by the Australian Red Cross Blood Service recommended reducing this 12-month deferral period from 12 months to six. This recommendation, however, was rejected by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. It is disappointing that the TGA rejected the findings made by the expert panel.

Moving away from the current policy would be in line with developments in other jurisdictions. For example, in the United Kingdom, the deferral period was recently reduced from 12 months to three months to more adequately reflect the scientific advances in testing. France also has changed its policy to reflect a scientifically sound approach. Donated blood plasma can be kept and stored for 12 months, where it can be used after the detection period has passed. France has thus removed deferral periods for plasma only donations for gay and bisexual men who have been in a monogamous relationship for the previous four months. These approaches are both great steps forward in acknowledging that health policy should evolve as technology develops, and that community expectations change. Frankly they put our policies to shame.

I am a proud supporter of the LGBTIQ community. I stand in support of Mr Steel today and thank him for putting forward this motion. The current blood donation policy is unnecessarily discriminatory against gay men. This blanket ban policy does not reflect technological changes. I urge the ACT government to call on the Therapeutic Goods Association and the federal Minister for Health to re-evaluate the current system. Firstly, they must adopt the recommendations of the 2012 review by the Australian Red Cross. Secondly, they must consider a further reduction in the deferral period to three months in line with the United Kingdom and to remove the deferral period for plasma donations for gay men in monogamous relationships.

Lastly, they must consider a change in approach with greater emphasis on individual risk-based assessments.

An individual risk approach would put greater scrutiny on people who engage in unsafe sex instead of focusing on the gender of a person's chosen partner. This approach would help to destigmatise same-sex relationships and to encourage safe sex. Let us reject unnecessary discrimination against queer men in our community. I call on all members in this place to support the motion.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (5.41): I will be short—I just want to address the amendment circulated by Mrs Dunne, which the minister has already addressed, and I agree with her views. My view is that the expert panel of the Australian Red Cross Blood Service is best placed to get on with its review on these matters rather than undertaking an Assembly inquiry. My understanding is that the review will have an outcome by the end of the year, so I would not want to have a concurrent process proceeding. I understand that there will be public consultation as part of that review, so it will provide a somewhat similar process to an Assembly committee inquiry for those who are interested in the issues.

This motion seeks to call on the TGA simply to consider the matters outlined in the motion in 4(a), (b) and (c), with the keyword being “consider”. I would be very surprised if these issues were not already being considered. It is entirely reasonable to support the adoption of the recommendations of the expert panel of the Red Cross Blood Donor Service without first having conducted an Assembly inquiry. We know well the scope of their review from last time and what they have recommended in the past. I expect they will do good work again. While raising issues of concern is valid—and we have done that through this motion—we have to defer to the experts to make a call, and that is exactly what this motion's intention is. I do not support the amendment, but I appreciate Mrs Dunne's interest in this issue. I commend the motion to the Assembly as it is.

Amendment negatived.

Original question resolved in the affirmative.

Privilege—alleged breach Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, on 22 March 2018 Ms Cody gave written notice of a possible breach of privilege concerning certain aspects of the conduct of Miss C Burch and Ms Lee as well as the use of the Liberal Party website to transmit submissions to the public accounts committee inquiry. I will provide a copy of Ms Cody's letter for the information of members.

Under the provisions of standing order 276 I must determine as soon as practicable whether or not the matter merits precedence over other business. If, in my opinion, the matter does merit precedence, I will inform the Assembly of the decision and the member who raised the matter may move a motion without notice and forthwith to refer the matter to a select committee appointed by the Assembly for that purpose.

If, in my opinion, the matter does not merit precedence, I must inform the member in writing and also inform the Assembly of that decision. I am not required to judge whether there has been a breach of privilege or a contempt of the Assembly; I can only judge whether it merits precedence.

In accordance with the practice of the House of Representatives, on 29 March I wrote to the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in order to ascertain from the committee whether the alleged actions by Miss C Burch and Ms Lee and the use of the Liberal Party website substantially interfered with the work of the committee and whether the committee intended to take any action in relation to the matter.

Today I received a response from the chair of the committee indicating that the committee had been unable to reach agreement as to whether the actions complained of had affected the work of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I will table a copy of the committee's letter for the information of members along with what I provided and wrote to the chair of the committee.

I have considered the matter and I have come to the view that the matter does merit precedence over other business. In accordance with the provisions of standing order 276, Ms Cody may, if she chooses, move an appropriate motion to refer the matter to a select committee on privileges.

Members, I table the correspondence I referred to.

Privilege—Alleged breach—

Copy of letter from Ms Cody to the Speaker, dated 22 March 2018.

Copy of letter from the Speaker to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, dated 29 March 2018.

Copy of letter from the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to the Speaker, dated 11 April 2018.

Privileges 2018—Select Committee Proposed establishment

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (5.45): Under standing order 276, I move:

That:

(1) this Assembly notes:

- (a) the letter distributed to Canberra residents in the names of Miss C. Burch and Ms Lee titled *Inquiry into the methodology for determining rates and land tax for apartments*;
- (b) the letter calls upon residents of the Australian Capital Territory to make submissions to an inquiry of an Assembly committee via the haveyoursay.net.au website;
- (c) the “haveyoursay” website is not operated by the committee secretariat, but by the Liberal Party of Australia ACT Division, with a registrant contact name of Alistair Coe;

- (d) the letter and the “haveyoursay” website may combine to create a false impression that they are proceedings of the Assembly or its committees;
 - (e) submissions made via the “haveyoursay” website will not be covered by privilege. Authors of submissions being sent to the “haveyoursay” website are not being correctly cautioned as to the nature of privilege;
 - (f) as political parties are not subject to the *Privacy Act 1988* (section 6C), there is no law governing how any information collected in the name of the Assembly, but by the website, will be used, or that all submissions made were accurately forwarded to the committee; and
 - (g) the possibility that submissions to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts were biased, and hence the course of the inquiry has been corrupted;
- (2) pursuant to standing order 277, a Select Committee on Privileges be established to examine whether there has been a breach of the standing orders by contempt of the committee individually, or by a conspiracy of Mr Coe, Ms Lee and Miss C. Burch in relation to matters noted and any other relevant matters, including whether the conduct constitutes;
- (a) interference with the Assembly;
 - (b) improper influence of Members in their committee work;
 - (c) molestation of Ms Lee and Miss C. Burch by Mr Coe as the leader of their party;
 - (d) false reports of proceedings of a committee;
 - (e) disobedience and obstruction of orders; and
 - (f) interference with or molestation of witnesses;
- (3) the Committee shall report back to the Assembly by the last sitting week in 2018; and
- (4) the Committee shall be composed of:
- (a) two members nominated by the Government; and
 - (b) two members nominated by the Opposition; and
 - (c) one member nominated by the Crossbench;
- to be notified to the Speaker by 4pm Thursday, 12 April 2018.

I note that this has been brought on for debate as a matter of precedence. On that basis, I am moving this motion and delivering my speech. However, due to the very late hour in the day and the significance and seriousness of this motion, I would be comfortable with—indeed, I urge members to do so—adjourning this debate at the conclusion of my speech and to make the debate an order of the day for the next sitting day so that we can thoroughly debate the motion.

The quality of our public institutions and our public discourse are important. Maintaining the strength of our democracy relies not just on the good functioning of its institutions but also on the behaviour of those in public office. The motion I move today relates to a very serious matter. It is an issue that I hope all members here take seriously. I know I do.

Whilst we have many differences of opinions in this place, and this is the place for differences of opinions, fair and honest behaviour by all members is important. As parliamentarians we are not just advocates for certain views, activists for certain causes or, in the case of cabinet members, the executive of the ACT government. We are also the custodians of democracy and the caretakers of this institution, the Legislative Assembly for the ACT.

As custodians of democracy and caretakers of the Legislative Assembly, we must at all times act to protect its reputation in the community, protect it not by cover-up or pompous declaration, but protect it by transparency in our procedure and, most of all, by ensuring that members do not abuse their position to misrepresent this place or its procedures.

My motion today aims to do exactly that. On the surface of it, there appears to have been some peculiar goings on. The correct response should be to set up a select committee with the appropriate powers to investigate with sufficient time to consider the matter and with a view to ensuring that the integrity of the Assembly is not just a theory but a transparent fact.

As there has not been a privileges committee established in the Assembly for some time, I think it is important that we remind ourselves that this procedure is not a punishment but a process of investigation. Where there are potentially peculiar goings on, the right thing to do by the Assembly is to investigate. The right thing to do by Mr Coe, Miss C Burch and Ms Lee is for a privileges committee to give them a fair hearing.

The ability of a privileges committee to call for evidence, as well as question witnesses, means that it can resolve whether there has been a contempt of the Assembly or its committees. It will report to the Assembly on any disciplinary action to be taken. It is the most appropriate process of investigation. I sincerely hope that the behaviour that I raise today, which looks like a contempt of the Assembly, proves to be entirely innocent.

For the benefit of all members, I will quickly walk you through the behaviour I am referring to. On 15 February this year, the Assembly granted leave to Mr Coe to present two out of order petitions on the subject of rates and land tax determinations for apartments. The Assembly then resolved to refer the matter to the public accounts committee for consideration.

Whilst, as a member of the PAC, I am in possession of certain information about the process of its work, I do not intend to reflect on the deliberations or process that that committee has undertaken, as per the standing orders. My motion today is not informed by my membership of that committee but is being advanced as a concerned member of the Assembly.

At a time before the establishment of the inquiry into the methodology for determining rates and land tax for strata residences, the Liberal Party of Australia, ACT division, established a website called haveyoursay.net.au. This website has

much in common with the official government consultation website of the ACT, your say—in name but also in many elements of visual design, content and style.

Whilst the fine print of haveyoursay.net.au reveals the website to be party political, rather than official consultation, I believe a reasonable person could be easily confused or, as I hope the privileges committee will consider, misled.

Of course, there are many false and misleading things on the internet, and a privileges committee is not the appropriate place to consider the Cambridge Analytica scandal and any connections it has with the Liberal Party. In the case of the haveyoursay.net.au website, however, I checked the internet registry for that website. I found that the registered contact name, the individual responsible for the website, was the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Alistair Coe.

I seek leave to table the Whois domain registry extract for the haveyoursay.net.au website.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not think you need leave, but it is granted, yes.

Mrs Dunne: She does need leave.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Mrs Dunne: Yes, leave is granted, but she does need leave.

MADAM SPEAKER: Leave is granted. Continue, Ms Cody.

MS CODY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I table the following extract:

Copy of Whois Domain.

The second component of the matter for which I am asking to set up a privileges committee is to consider a letter received by a dear friend of mine living in the inner north. The letter was found in my friend's letterbox and was co-signed by Ms Lee and Miss C Burch. I have since satisfied myself that the letter was bulk distributed by them or on their behalf.

I seek leave to table the letter titled "Inquiry into the methodology for determining rates and land tax for apartments."

Leave granted.

MS CODY: I table the following document:

Inquiry into the methodology for determining rates and land tax for apartments—
Copy of letter from Ms Lee and Miss C. Burch, undated.

Members may notice that Ms Lee and Miss C Burch have got the name of the inquiry wrong, including what I think is an unreasonable reflection on two of the parties in

this place and showing a disregard for grammar that would make my schoolteacher mother blush. But none of those things is contempt.

The important part of the letter I would like to draw members' attention to is the second last paragraph. In that paragraph residents are encouraged to make negative submissions to the PAC inquiry via the haveyoursay.net.au website. Neither Miss C Burch nor Ms Lee is a member of the public accounts committee. However, Mr Coe is a member of PAC and, as we have already established, it would seem that Mr Coe is the operator of the haveyoursay.net.au website.

When I saw that, it triggered a memory. I went for a dig into the archives, and let me take a moment to compliment the Clerk and all his staff for an easy to navigate and comprehensive website. What I found was a report of a privileges committee dated 19 March 2004. In that case it was found that the chair of the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment was in contempt of the Assembly because of interference with submissions. Whilst I will not quote from the report at length, its first finding was:

The committee is of the view that the distribution of the leaflet was “likely to amount to an improper interference with the free exercise by ... a committee of its authority or functions”; that this interference was serious; and that there was a clear intent shown by the Chair, Mrs Dunne, through the wording of the leaflet, to create this interference by advocating one particular view on the question under inquiry.

For members wishing to learn more about that matter, it is filed under “Select Committee on Privileges 3” from the Fifth Assembly or, if she is in a kindly mood, they might like to ask Mrs Dunne.

What I am suggesting here is that, via conspiracy, Mr Coe, Ms Lee and Miss C Burch may have constructed a circumstance similar to that found in contempt in 2004. For the benefit of the Assembly, I seek leave to table one final document: a printout of the web page that the letter suggests residents use to submit to the inquiry.

Leave granted.

MS CODY: I present the following paper:

Inquiry into the methodology for determining rates and land tax for apartments—

Copy of Have Your Say—An initiative of the Canberra Liberals, posted on 7 March 2018.

Members will notice that the page initially provides some commentary, then correctly quotes from the ACT Legislative Assembly's website about the method of making submissions. It then suggests that submissions can also be made via a web form. From my understanding, that information is captured by the Liberal Party and, other than an assertion that it will be passed directly on to the committee, we cannot be sure that submissions were passed on accurately or at all.

I am also highly concerned that, unlike submissions made via the proper channels, the protections afforded to evidence submitted to committees was not present at the time of submission. I would also like to highlight that this page is then authorised by Alistair Coe.

For members who have not visited the Assembly website and read the submissions, I can confirm that several published by the PAC are clearly identified as coming from the haveyoursay.net.au website. As per the standing orders, the treatment of those submissions by the PAC is a matter for the PAC. On the other hand, the in-principle issue of having members here corrupting the evidence received by committees should be alarming for everyone.

There are several matters arising from this potential conspiracy in contempt of the Assembly that need consideration by a privileges committee.

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 CODY: Does this constitute interference with the Assembly, as was the case in 2004? Was this intended to improperly influence members in their committee work? How did Ms Lee and Miss C Burch come to distribute the contemptuous material? Did Mr Coe use his influence as leader of the Liberal Party to molest two new, inexperienced—

Mrs Dunne: On a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Cody, can you just hold and resume your seat.

Mrs Dunne: I think that Ms Cody needs to withdraw that the material was contemptuous. That will be tested by a privileges committee.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you repeat what you have just said, Ms Cody?

MS CODY: Yes, “come to distribute the contemptuous material”.

MADAM SPEAKER: What you believe to be.

MS CODY: What I believe to be contemptuous.

Mrs Dunne: If she says she believes it to be contemptuous, that is fine.

MS CODY: How did Ms Lee and Miss C Burch come to distribute the material that I believe is contemptuous?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS CODY: I had not finished the sentence. Did Mr Coe use his influence in the Liberal Party to molest two new, inexperienced members of the Assembly? This could be a case of a man in a position of authority abusing his position.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Cody, I think in the context of that, I am going to ask you to be careful again. I believe that you clarified that it was your view that it was contemptuous; so there is no point of order. Ms Cody, continue and do be mindful of your language.

MS CODY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have taken a lot of this language from the standing orders. I apologise if there are some problems. I have used the standing orders.

Is the suggestion that submissions be made in an improper way a false report of the proceedings of a committee? There are questions which demand answers, and only a privileges committee can answer them.

Finally, more for the benefit of those listening in than those present, I would also like to highlight how this is different from some other issues raised from time to time. We have had some members who like to use discussions of privileges committees and various disciplinary motions for political smear. We should not allow ourselves to descend to the level of Tony Abbott's Liberal opposition or the dumpster fire of democracy that Matthew Guy's Liberal opposition have created in Victoria.

The people of the ACT expect and deserve better. From time to time it is pointed out by certain members that the Labor Party has affiliated trade unions. There is nothing misleading about that. It is called the Labor Party. The hint is in its name—much like there is a political party called the Greens. Its politics is, unremarkably, centred on environmentalism and sustainability. This sort of radically honest branding may be lost on conservative politicians who run around calling themselves Liberals.

Since the days when Mr Hanson was Leader of the Opposition some members have had a peculiar fetish of discussing the CFMEU as if they are an enemy of the state. (*Time expired.*)

Debate (on motion by **Ms Le Couteur**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Project Booyah Yogie awards

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (6.04): Earlier this week, I was honoured to join a group of young people as they graduated from project Booyah at an emotional ceremony at the Tuggeranong Community Centre. Project Booyah is run by the Canberra Police Community Youth Club, better known as PCYC, and is a 20-week early intervention program originally developed by the Queensland Police Service.

Over the past two years, project Booyah has supported at-risk young Canberrans aged between 14 and 18 to complete certificate II qualifications and gain workplace skills, and assist them to employment. It incorporates adventure-based learning, social development, mentoring, and a structured three-day outdoor educational camp that focuses on leadership and team building to grow confidence. Caseworkers educate participants on topics like drug and alcohol awareness, mental health, respectful relationships, anger management, consequences of crime and physical health. Many participants in the program were referred to the program because they were disengaged from education or considered to be at risk of offending.

The vast majority of graduates from previous cohorts, more than 80 per cent, have not offended since leaving the program, which is an amazing result. Canberra PCYC executive director, Cheryl O'Donnell, is quoted in today's *Canberra Times* as saying that they see "the change in attitude, their behaviours, their ability to actually socialise in a positive manner". The article goes on:

"[When we first meet them]—

Ms O'Donnell says—

we'll ask them what they see as their future, and four out of six had said they could see themselves in future years actually ending up in the AMC (Alexander Maconochie Centre).

The article continues:

When we've got that negative outlook and this is my pathway and this is how it's all been mapped out for me, to be able to change that mindset is amazing.

One proud dad at the graduation told me how the program had turned things around for his son and, in doing so, had also turned things around for his family and friends.

I know that Mrs Kikkert has spoken of this program in the Assembly before, and I join her in congratulating PCYC for such a fabulous program.

The ACT government considers Canberra PCYC a vital partner in the youth justice space more broadly. The Community Services Directorate provided more than \$640,000 in funding for PCYC programs last year, and further funding comes from ACT Policing. The PCYC has helped countless young people and their families in the Canberra community for the past 60 years.

I was therefore very pleased to see their contribution recognised last year at the 2017 Yogie awards, which are organised by the Youth Coalition of the ACT to

celebrate community organisations and individuals who support and advocate for young people. The PCYC very deservedly received the Yogie award for innovation in service delivery for its intensive diversion program targeting young recidivist offenders.

As I have not yet spoken about the 2017 Yogie awards in this place, I will take this opportunity, as an aside, to briefly acknowledge the other winners: for outstanding achievement in youth participation, the LGBTQIA+ & Allies prom 2017, YWCA Canberra; excellence in research and evaluation, research to practice series, Institute of Child Protection Studies—another partner of the child and youth protection services that we greatly value; outstanding youth worker, Richie Unga, St John's YouthCare; Canberra youth work champion, Daniel Gaffney, Belconnen Community Service; outstanding new talent, Olivia Hatfield, Anglicare; lifetime achievement, Fiona MacGregor; outstanding contribution to young people, Umair Qureshi, Anglicare YEP; and staff acknowledgement, Families ACT.

All of these organisations and individuals helped build a stronger, fairer, more inclusive Canberra by listening to young people and supporting them to overcome barriers and make the most of their unique talents. As Youth Week approaches, I thank and applaud them for the work they do with Canberra's young people every week of the year.

I would like to conclude by congratulating all of the participants in project Booyah, together with the amazing PCYC workers who have supported them through the program, and the families and carers who have assisted them to attend each day.

I would like to recognise that the commonwealth government has funded project Booyah in the ACT for the past two years but, unfortunately, this funding expires on 30 June 2018. I was pleased to see Senator Zed Seselja attending Monday's graduation and expressing his support for the continuation of funding. Fingers crossed, Madam Assistant Speaker.

Finally, I remind members that the Canberra PCYC will be holding a 60th anniversary gala at the Hellenic Club in Woden on Saturday, 2 June from 6.30 pm. Tickets are \$150 for individuals or \$1,200 for a table of 10, and can be booked via their website. Although I will, sadly, be out of town that weekend, I encourage members to attend if they can.

Mr Myuran Sukumaran—art exhibition

MS J BURCH (Brindabella) (6.09): It was my somewhat melancholy pleasure to recently attend the *Another Day in Paradise* exhibition in Tuggeranong Arts Centre. This was an exhibition of art painted by Myuran Sukumaran. The exhibition is showing as part of a broader suite of public programs called "The human condition", and it is available at Tuggeranong Arts Centre until 29 April.

The program invites the community to explore challenging themes and questions that emerge from Sukumaran's poignant and powerful works. Many people know the story

well. He was sentenced to execution by firing squad in February 2006. This was carried out in April 2015.

What makes the Sukumaran story so heartbreaking is the person he became in prison. He taught English, computer, graphic design and philosophy classes to other prisoners. He was foundational in opening a computer and arts studio. He lobbied for the implementation of accountancy and legal courses in prison. He took on leadership roles, working with the guards, resolving disputes and making small repairs around the prison. From prison, Sukumaran started a business selling artworks. He was working towards his bachelor degree in fine arts from Curtin University.

On viewing his artworks, like everyone else at the exhibition, I was humbled but deeply moved. The exhibition brought the personal impact and cost of such a severe punishment system home to me. This was only heightened by having his family in the room at the opening of the exhibition.

The gallery of artworks he painted in his final 72 hours offered otherwise unobtainable and harrowing insights into his thinking, his mind, in those final hours and days of his life. If anyone has time, I would encourage them to go to Tuggeranong Arts Centre to see this exhibition and to see this how this young man, facing his final 72 hours, displayed that in artworks. When you walk away, you are not the same person.

It is simply great to see an exhibition of such character and such depth in our local Tuggeranong Arts Centre. The Tuggeranong Arts Centre goes from strength to strength. It has been providing meaningful community participation and opportunities for more than 25 years. It builds on the artistic and cohesive capital of creative thinking from Tuggeranong. The flow-on effects from the centre's work across the local community is there to be seen.

To Rauny Worm and her team, for all of the work that they do at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, I say: keep up the good work. It is a jewel in the Tuggeranong Valley. I would say to anyone who wants to consider the human condition and go on a journey of reflection that this is an exhibition that will make you think, that will make you reflect. It has changed my world.

Hawker Primary School fete

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (6.12): It was my privilege on a recent Sunday morning to attend the autumn fete held at Hawker Primary School, and what a fantastic event it was. I think all of Hawker and half of the surrounding suburbs showed up.

Fetes are always an exciting time for school students, the staff and the community. They are also complex events to plan and run well. I therefore want to express my particular thanks to coordinators Emma Dykes and Suze Carr, who managed to stage an event no-one in attendance will ever forget. Emma and Suze were assisted by a team of volunteers who powerfully worked together so that everything ran beautifully.

Quite literally, the fete had something for everyone. Activities included a mascot race, a fencing demonstration, a goal-kicking competition and more. Hungry attendees could choose from amongst curry, egg and bacon rolls, ice cream spiders and chocolate, just to name a few options. Rides were also available for children. Other stalls catered to mums and dads. The atmosphere was enhanced by a variety of performers.

The coordinators had secured the generous support of several dozen sponsors. These local businesses donated gift vouchers, food to be sold and services to be raffled off and won, amongst others. I wish I could personally thank each of these sponsoring businesses by name, but there were simply too many of them, as there were more than 50.

I spent most of my time at the fete volunteering at the craft stall, and this was great fun. I especially found it delightful to see children being responsible with their pocket money, carefully purchasing goods that they loved. Leading up to the fete the school had held crafts nights for parents, children and other community members to make the goods to be sold. I want to extend my thanks to these mums and dads and other supporters from the community, including those who helped do letterbox drops around the area to spread the word.

In short, the Hawker school autumn fete was a perfect example of what can happen when passionate leaders and volunteers help to bring a community together in a common cause. The P&C worked together with the school to help improve educational facilities where they are needed most. In recent years this has included creating outdoor learning spaces and major playground initiatives. I am glad the Hawker school and its associated P&C will be able to use the funds generated this year to continue to support the education and wellbeing of its lucky primary school students.

Again, I wish to express my gratitude to all those who contributed in any way, including by attending.

Girls take over parliament *Forbes Asia 30 under 30*

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (6.15): Madam Speaker, you may remember that in October last year a few members in this chamber had the privilege of stepping aside to let a girl, or a young woman, take over their office for the day. It was part of the global “GirlsTakeover” initiative to celebrate International Day of the Girl. Worldwide more than 600 women took over positions of leadership across 60 organisations.

Girls take over parliament was a local spin-off that placed 17 young women in the roles of members of parliament around Australia. The two women responsible for pioneering the program locally were Ashleigh Streeter and Caitlin Figueiredo. If those names sound familiar it is because we speak about them quite a bit in this place. As you might recall, they were named the 2018 ACT Woman of the Year and Young Woman of the Year respectively.

The pair have now been named in the *Forbes Asia* 30 under 30 for their work on girls take over parliament. They have been recognised as youthful visionaries for their efforts, and now sit alongside a host of *Forbes* young entrepreneurs, innovators and game changers.

During girls take over parliament the ACT Legislative Assembly welcomed six young women into our offices whose interests ranged from politics and sports to media, art and community affairs. Their diverse range of interests were all based on common ground: a passion for the rights of women, of girls, and for gender equality.

We politicians were lucky to share in the skills, strength and determination of young women in our community. One day of working with Linda, who came to my office, would be enough to prove to anyone that they would be foolish to underestimate young women or their suitability for a leadership role.

Girls take over parliament promotes cultural change so that women and girls in leadership can become the new normal. It aims to fill the gaps: the pay gap, the representation gap, the dream gap and the confidence gap.

I would like to extend my congratulations again to Ashleigh Streeter and Caitlin Figueiredo on their tireless efforts to bring gender equality into the spotlight and, in particular, on their ingenuity in establishing girls take over parliament. Being recognised as *Forbes* young leaders under 30 is just another way of bringing more attention to that.

Canberra is well and truly punching above its weight when it comes to recognition on the *Forbes Asia* 30 under 30 list, with Kate Crowhurst also taking out the gong. Kate was named in the finance and venture capital category for her innovative work empowering young people both in Canberra and nationally.

One of the key things to being independent is having the skills to manage your own budget and knowing how to make financial decisions based on your own circumstances. It is not something that comes naturally to a lot of people. When you are young, it can be pretty confusing and scary to navigate. Kate is ensuring that young Australians have the financial literacy skills they need to make sound financial decisions now and plan for their future. In her day job at ASIC she writes and implements national policy to ensure that young Australians have the financial literacy skills they need. Outside the office she regularly writes interesting and accessible books, textbooks, and articles to bring this otherwise dry subject to life.

Kate is committed to engaging young people in the things that matter. On top of empowering young people with financial literacy skills, she is working to ensure their voices are heard. Kate is the founder of advocate, a brand new program connecting young Canberrans with their local politicians.

It is often the perception that people under 30 do not care about politics or the issues that matter. We know that is wrong; they just approach it differently. Kate's program selects five people aged between 18 and 30. Over the course of this year these five

participants will meet regularly with members of Labor, Liberals and Greens in this Assembly to talk about the issues they care about and to learn exactly what goes on inside this building. Advocate is in its first year, and I wish Kate all the best with her plans to expand it nationally.

To be named in the *Forbes Asia* 30 under 30 is a remarkable achievement, and I applaud Ashleigh Streeter, Caitlin Figueiredo and Kate Crowhurst. I hope I am able to participate in the future in these incredible women's initiatives, and I encourage everyone in this Assembly to open their offices to them.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.20 pm.